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SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

MASTER'S THESIS

**AN ANALYSIS OF STUDY LOCATION CHOICE AND TOURISM  
CONSUMPTION AMONG EXCHANGE STUDENTS**

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MÁRK TAMÁS RÉPÁSZKY

## AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The undersigned Márk Tamás Répászky, a student at the University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, (hereafter: SEB LU), author of this written final work of studies with the title An analysis of study location choice and tourism consumption among exchange students, prepared under supervision of Assist. Prof. Daša Farčnik, PhD

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>1 EDUCATIONAL TOURISM.....</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>1.1 Education and tourism .....</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>1.2 Historical retrospect of educational tourism.....</b>                       | <b>8</b>  |
| 1.2.1 Ancient times.....   | 8         |
| 1.2.2 The Middle Ages .....  | 8         |
| 1.2.3 Between the Grand Tour and the late 19 <sup>th</sup> century .....           | 9         |
| 1.2.4 The time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.....                                 | 10        |
| 1.2.5 Between 1919 and 1987 .....  | 11        |
| <b>1.3 Motivations for participating in the educational tourism.....</b>           | <b>11</b> |
| <b>1.4 Factors influencing the choice of educational tourism destination .....</b> | <b>13</b> |
| <b>1.5 Educational tourists expenditures and contribution to tourism .....</b>     | <b>15</b> |
| <b>1.6 The importance of youth tourism and educational tourism .....</b>           | <b>16</b> |
| <b>2 Erasmus and Erasmus + programme.....</b>                                      | <b>20</b> |
| <b>2.1 The history of the Erasmus program .....</b>                                | <b>20</b> |
| <b>2.2 Erasmus+ program nowadays .....</b>   | <b>20</b> |
| <b>3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH .....</b>  | <b>24</b> |
| <b>3.1 Research objective .....</b>  | <b>24</b> |
| <b>3.2 Research methodology and data collection .....</b>                          | <b>25</b> |
| 3.2.1 In-depth interviews .....  | 25        |
| 3.2.2 Online questionnaire.....  | 26        |
| 3.2.3 Cluster analysis.....  | 28        |
| <b>3.3 Sample description.....</b>   | <b>29</b> |
| <b>3.4 Results .....</b>   | <b>32</b> |
| 3.4.1 Mobility coordinators' views related to the research topic .....             | 32        |
| 3.4.2 Results from the questionnaire .....   | 35        |
| 3.4.3 Hierarchical clustering.....   | 48        |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 3.5 Discussion and limitations.....                            | 50 |
| CONCLUSIONS.....   | 52 |
| REFERENCE LIST .....   | 55 |
| Appendices .....   | 69 |
| Appendix 1: Summary in Slovene.....                            | 1  |
| Appendix 2: Transcript of the interviews .....                 | 3  |
| Appendix 3: Survey (PDF version, starts on the next page)..... | 8  |
| Appendix 4: Dendogram of the clusters .....                    | 26 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Figure 1: Erasmus+ grants by mobility category and total programme participants, 2014-2017. ....           | 21 |
| Figure 2: Most popular destination countries among Erasmus+ students in 2018/19 .....                      | 22 |
| Figure 3: Age of the participants.....   | 30 |
| Figure 4: Origin of the respondents.....   | 30 |
| Figure 5: Chosen countries for the mobility.....   | 31 |
| Figure 6: Monthly average net incomes of the respondents.....  | 32 |
| Figure 7: Prevailing motives for going on student mobility .....   | 36 |
| Figure 8: Primary reasons for choosing the mobility destination (past/current participants)<br>.....       | 38 |
| Figure 9: Primary reasons for choosing the mobility destination (potential future participants) .....      | 38 |
| Figure 10: Prevailing factors for choosing a mobility destination .....                                    | 39 |
| Figure 11: Destination attributes- distance of touristic places from the chosen mobility destination.....  | 41 |
| Figure 12: Destination attributes- distance of touristic places from the desired mobility destination..... | 41 |
| Figure 13: Importance of cheaper cost of living .....  | 42 |
| Figure 14: Spending in tourism.....  | 43 |
| Figure 15: Returning to the place of the mobility and its reasons.....                                     | 44 |
| Figure 16: Visitors of students during mobility .....  | 45 |
| Figure 17: Willingness to participate in student mobility during times of a crisis .....                   | 46 |
| Figure 18: Impact of the COVID-19 virus on student mobilities in Europe.....                               | 46 |
| Figure 19: Physical location of exchange students in Europe during the COVID-19 virus.<br>.....            | 47 |

## LIST OF TABLES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Motivational factors for educational tourism .....  | 12 |
| Table 2: Means, standard deviation, t-test and significance of the prevailing factors .....                      | 40 |
| Table 3: Segmentation Variables, Means of each segmentation variable for each segment<br>with cluster sizes..... | 49 |

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR - Argentina

AT - Austria

AU - Australia

BE - Belgium

BR - Brazil

CA – Canada

CH - Switzerland

CL – Chile

CN – China

CR - Costa Rica

CY - Cyprus

CZ - Czech Republic

DE – Germany

DK - Denmark

EC - European Commission

EE - Estonia

EG - Egypt

ERASMUS - European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students

ES - Spain

ESN - Erasmus Student Network

EU - European Union

EVS - European Voluntary Service

FI - Finland

FR - France

GB – Great Britain

GR - Greece

HR - Croatia

HU - Hungary

IE - Ireland

IL - Israel

ILO - International Labour Office

IT - Italy

JP - Japan

KR - Korea (South)

LT - Lithuania

ME - Montenegro

MK - North Macedonia

MX - Mexico

NL - Netherlands

OPEC - Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

PC - Partner Countries

PL - Poland

PR - Puerto Rico

PT - Portugal

RO - Romania

RS - Serbia

RU - Russian Federation

SE - Sweden

SH - Saint Helena

SI - Slovenia

TIES - The International Ecotourism Society

TJ - Tajikistan

TKA - Tempus Közalapítvány = Tempus Public Foundation

TR - Turkey

UA - Ukraine

UCAS - Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

UG - University of Graz

UL - University of Ljubljana

US - United States of America

UT - University of Trieste

UN - United Nations

UNWTO - United Nations World Tourism Organisation

VET - vocational education and training

VFR - visiting friends and relatives

WTO - World Tourism Organisation

WYSE - World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation

ZA - South Africa





## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is playing an increasingly important role in Europe's economic and social development. The number of international arrivals in Europe was 744 million in 2019 (an increase of 4% compared to 2018), and tourism receipts amounted to USD 576 billion (an increase of 4%) (World Tourism Organisation [WTO], 2021b). In 2020, the number of international arrivals in Europe declined by almost 70%, resulting in a loss in international tourism receipts of about USD 1.3 trillion (WTO, 2021a). All segments and sub-segments play an important role in rebuilding tourism. Educational and youth tourists are considered as an important segment of tourism (Ghete, 2015; Çakar & Seyitoğlu, 2016).

For young people, travel is no longer just a leisure activity to get away from everyday life, but it has become part of their daily routine. Educational tourism is an important segment of youth tourism. Educational tourism is an organized leisure trip that mainly takes place in an informal setting, lasts at least 24 hours (Sie, Patterson & Pegg, 2016) but less than a year (Huang, 2008) and is associated with learning (Tomasi, Paviotti, Cavicchi, 2020). Educational tourism consists of cultural trips, study tours, foreign language studies, international mobilities to foreign colleges and universities, and the like (Slimbach, 2010). Voleva-Petrova (2020) asserts that educational tourism - which is a combination of tourism product and education product - can also be student mobility if it is shorter than 12 months. As part of educational tourism, student mobility, such as the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students [Erasmus program], is also becoming increasingly popular among young people. International student mobility is defined as any form of international mobility that takes place as part of a higher education program (Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, and the Centre for Applied Population Research, 2004). In 2022, the popular Erasmus program will celebrate its 35th anniversary and since its inception, the number of participants has increased. In 2018/2019, 335,600 students went on exchange (Publication Office of the European Union, 2020). The main destination countries for higher education participants in Erasmus+ exchanges in 2018/2019 were Spain, Germany, France, the UK and Italy.

Students traveling abroad for learning are an important segment of educational tourism. The motive of traveling for educational purposes has been known since the early Middle Ages (Mikonya, 2014), and even today students may travel abroad to study (for short or long periods). Some of the predominant motivating factors of students for educational tourism are seeking new experiences (Lesjak et al., 2015; Sanchez, Fornerino & Zhang, 2006; Taylor & Rivera; 2011), living in or learning about other cultures (Van Hoof & Hensen, 2006), living in a different place (Lesjak et al., 2015), acquiring academic knowledge (Lam, Ariffin & Ahmad, 2011), improving future opportunities by studying abroad, professional and career development (Glover, 2010, 2011; Nyaupane, Paris & Teye, 2011; Lam et al, 2011; Abubakar, Shneikat & Oday, 2014; Tashlai & Ivanov, 2014) and travelling (Sanchez et al., 2006; Van Hoof, 2006). Although education is the main motivation for students to participate in educational tourism (Kadir & Faruk adopted from Gardiner & King, 2016), they also have

other motives. For example, Stone & Petrick (2013), Vossensteyn et al. (2010), Lesjak, Juvan, Ineson, Yap & Axelsson (2015) and Messer & Wolter (2007) found that students travel to a foreign country not only for educational reasons, to develop personally and to improve their professional skills and career opportunities, but also to relax and travel.

Exchange students are considered as tourists (Eurostat, 2013). In line with the IRTS 2008, students participating in a short-term program of less than one year should be considered as visitors and classified as tourism (if they stay outside their usual environment, neither in their home town nor in their daily commute) (Eurostat, 2013, United Nations, 2010). The importance of exchange students as a segment of educational tourism was highlighted by Tomasi et al. (2020) in their research on educational tourism and local development, which considered international students as educational tourists. Marinescu (2017) referred to the Erasmus program as the most developed segment of educational tourism. Abubakar et al. (2014), Lam et al. (2011), Lee (2014), Michael, Armstrong & King (2004), Nyaupane et al. (2011), Rahman, Osman & Raman (2017) and Tashlai (2014) stated that the most common reasons for choosing a particular foreign college for study are the quality of education and the attractiveness of the host country.

By moving to the place of study, the distances to other tourist attractions are reduced compared to the distances from their home country. Shorter distances reduce costs, so a convenient location may also motivate students to travel on exchange. According to Mckercher & Lew (2003), distance decay theory predicts that demand increases for a certain distance in relative proximity to a source market and decreases exponentially as distance increases. Educational tourism also allows students to travel closer to the host city and is therefore related to youth tourism. Young travellers are central to the future of tourism as more and more young people participate in tourism (Richards & Wilson, 2004; Richards, 2006; United Nations World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO] and World Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation [WYSE Travel Confederation], 2016).

International student mobility, such as the Erasmus program, can bring benefits to both participants and destinations. Borgioli & Manuelli (2013) found that the value added by international student programs is significant not only in education, but also in several other sectors, as economic impacts were measured in the following areas: Retail, Food and Beverage, Transportation, and Other Services, including Arts and Entertainment.

The presence of high quality international education and exchange students can be an important factor in tourism planning and development (Tomasi et al., 2020). Therefore, it is important that policy makers and stakeholders consider international students as an important sub-segment of tourists.

Students participating in exchange or mobility programs can be considered as part of both youth tourism and educational tourism. In addition, students may simultaneously participate in other types of tourism, such as rural tourism, cultural tourism, sports tourism, or

ecotourism, while studying near some tourist attractions or interesting destinations. Young tourists are also interested and sensitive to ecotourism, sustainability and sustainable tourism offers (Buffa, 2015; Chhabra, 2011; Cini, 2012; Leask, 2011; Moscardo & Beckendorff, 2010; Nusair, Parsa, & Cobanoughlu, 2012; Pendergast et al., 2009; Scarpato, Annuziata & Ardeleanu, 2014).

Since exchange students are an important segment of educational tourism, I will focus more on them in my study. In particular, I will investigate what factors influence their choice and whether Erasmus and other exchange students also choose their host country based on the attractiveness of a destination and the tourism products available. Therefore, the main objective of this thesis is to investigate whether students choose the destination of their mobility based on the nearby tourist attractions and what factors mainly influence the choice of the destination. Another objective of this thesis is to investigate the travel habits and travel-related expenditures of exchange students in order to determine the importance of a particular sub-segment in educational tourism.

This master thesis will focus on the travel motivations of exchange students. Since travel-related motivations are obviously not the only important factors influencing the decision-making process of choosing a study destination, other motives such as cost of living, experiencing a foreign educational system, meeting new people/friends, gaining more independence, and learning foreign languages must also be investigated for (Van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005; Bracht, et al., 2006; González Mesanza, & Mariel, 2011; Ingraham & Peterson, 2014).

I am interested in tourism consumption during the exchange program and the resulting contribution of exchange students to tourism revenue. The location of student mobility, i.e., the proximity of tourist attractions, geographic and natural elements such as coasts and mountains to students' temporary residence, may be beneficial from a travel perspective. Michael et al. (2004) pointed out several activities that are preferred by international students: dining out, visiting festivals, national parks, art, museum visits and entertainment. Another objective of this master thesis is to investigate whether exchange students return to the place of their mobility and thus generate additional tourism revenue. Another objective is to examine whether students recommend the place they went on exchange to others, as travel based on recommendations also generates additional tourism expenditure. Due to the actuality of the COVID-19 outbreak and its following waves, students' participation willingness will be examined during times of a health crisis, like COVID-19 pandemics.

I also investigate the motivational effect of travel in the case of student mobility. McGladdery & Lubbe (2017) also investigated motivation, highlighting that it is sometimes a complex process to determine whether the willingness to learn while traveling is a primary or secondary motivation among international students. Participation in an exchange study program also has benefits for employment and career development as well as professional mobility (Bracht et al., 2006; EC, 2014).

In line with the aims of my Master's thesis, I propose six research questions. The following research questions were formulated based on the existing literature. The first four research questions relate to the choice of destination for student mobility:

*Q1: How important are the tourist attractions of the host country in the choice of student mobility destination?*

*Q2: How important is the proximity of other well-known tourist destinations when choosing the student mobility destination?*

*Q3: Is there a group of students for which the tourist attractions (being a tourist destination) are more important than other aspects for choosing the mobility destination? If yes, what is the size of this group?*

*Q4: How do living costs influence the choice of the student mobility destination?*

When students are already in a foreign country, they spend money on education, food, accommodation, insurance, utilities (water, heating/cooling, electricity, gas, garbage, and internet), but they may also buy tourism-related products. Therefore, the fifth research question is:

*Q5: How much money do students spend on tourism-related products and/or services during their mobility?*

The COVID-19 virus has disrupted ongoing and planned student mobility, as well as other areas of life. However, youth are resilient when it comes to travelling, going abroad. The fifth research question was based on this.

*Q6: Will students want to go on student mobility even in times of health crisis, like COVID-19?*

First, a literature review based on secondary data was conducted to gain a better understanding of the decision-making process and factors influencing educational tourism and student mobility. After exploring the various motives of students who go on mobility, in-depth interviews with three mobility coordinators were conducted to get a deeper insight to the students' destination choice process, travelling habits and spending in tourism and also to develop an online questionnaire. Therefore, based on both the literature reviewed and interviews with three mobility coordinators, an online questionnaire was created to collect primary data and answer the research questions.

Preferences and motivations in choosing a destination, spending on tourism products and/or services during the exchange program, as well as standard demographic data were collected. In particular, the questionnaire consisted of five parts. The first set of questions included questions about participation in student mobility. The second part addressed the motivations for participating in international student mobility. The third set of questions examined the

importance of the destination attributes at the chosen mobility destination and also the main reasons for choosing the mobility destination, including questions about the importance of tourist attractions as well as their proximity to choose a certain destination for student mobility. The fourth section investigated students' expenses during their stay abroad. The fifth part also referred to expenses, before, during, and after the mobility, and addresses the question about students' participation willingness in times of a crisis situation, such as COVID-19. This section collected also the standard demographic data.

In order to address the first and the second research questions and to assess the importance of tourist attractions in the choice of mobility destination, the respondents could choose from 9 factors (it is safe, it is well-known, someone recommended it to me, it offers tourist sights, its surrounding area offers tourist sights, it is far from my home country, it is NOT far from my home country, its cost of living is similar to my home country, its cost of living is cheaper than in my home country) on a five-point Likert scale. The mean of the factors for choosing a mobility destination was calculated followed by a t-test that tested if the mean was significantly higher than 3, which represented the option of not either being important nor unimportant factor in the choice of a mobility destination. In order to infer about the importance of tourist attractions and products, proximity of the destination was compared relative to other factors, such as proximity of airport, being a capital city, having coast, historical city, famous museums, UNESCO World Heritage site and national parks. For answering research question number 3, I conducted exploratory hierarchical cluster analysis. In order to answer the fourth research question, the respondents could indicate the importance of 9 factors on a five-point Likert scale. Then with the same method, as at the first and second research questions, I checked, if the mean of the variable 'similar or cheaper living cost' is statistically significantly higher than 3. To address the fifth research question, students marked their estimated costs on different categories of expenditures during the mobility. To respond to the sixth research question, participants could answer, yes, no or do not know/ do not want to answer, if they would go on mobility in times of a health crisis.

With an online survey 431 responses were collected from current exchange students and from exchange students who have already completed an exchange and are considering one in the following academic years, as well as from students who have not yet participated in a mobility programme but intend to do so at a later stage. Most of the respondents are current or former students from four universities: University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, University of Graz, Austria, University of Trieste, Italy and Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary.

The contribution of this master thesis is to investigate the factors affecting the study location choice and by that contribute to the body of literature that investigates the decision process of the choice of destination of educational tourism. It also presents and highlights the importance of student mobility as part of the educational tourism segment, thus drawing the attention of policy makers and stakeholders to this group. The findings of this research will be as useful to policy makers and stakeholders in planning and developing tourism and education strategies for a destination.

This master's thesis is structured as follows: at the beginning of the master thesis, the literature review will present the brief history of educational tourism and international student mobility. In the second part of the literature review, I will focus particularly on the different motivations for participating in student exchange programs and to what extent travel-related factors influence the decision-making process. The factors I will particularly focus on are the type, distance and cost of living in the destination country. The Erasmus and Erasmus+ programs will then be described. In the third chapter, the applied research methodology will be presented: interviews with student mobility coordinators, questionnaire, descriptive statistics and cluster analysis. The results of the primary research are then presented, followed by a discussion and limitations. The fourth chapter presents the conclusions of the research.

# **1 EDUCATIONAL TOURISM**

## **1.1 Education and tourism**

The central goal of the educational tourist is to acquire new knowledge about the culture or history of foreign countries or cities (Khosrow-Pour, 2014). 'Educational tourists (students, adults, and seniors) are those respondents who indicated that they took part in study tours or who attended workshops to learn new skills or improve existing ones while on vacation' (Gibson, 1988, p. 5). Falk, Ballantyne, Packer & Benckendorff (2012) also examined the relationship between travel and learning and confirmed that travel always has a learning component, even if it is often passive.

Tomasi et al. (2020) define educational tourism as a learning experience, which is organised and managed by an educational institution. Educational tourism is 'tourist activity undertaken by those who are undertaking an overnight vacation and those who are undertaking an excursion for whom education and learning is a primary (education first segment) or secondary (tourism first segment) part of their trip' (Ritchie, 2003, p. 18). It is 'a form of tourist experience that explicitly aims to provide structured learning in situation through active and engaged intellectual praxis. Learning is explicit and core to the delivery of the product' (Pitman, Broomhall, & Majocha, 2011, p. 6). 'Organised trip led by skilled guides where leisure-travel activities and learning processes occur simultaneously through interaction between related stakeholders (participants, tour operators/leaders, and local community) as part of the total experience. The educational tourism experience occurs within a certain period of time (minimum of 24 h away from home) and generally ensues in an informal setting' (Sie et al. 2016, p. 107).

In 2016, Nugroho & Soeprihanto examined the relationship between the education and tourism sectors and described educational tourism as a three-dimensional product:

- 1st dimension: the educational experience at the respective destination and the resulting learning benefit (main product);
- 2nd dimension: the tourist package that meets the needs of the traveller (genuine product);
- 3rd dimension: all tangible and intangible aspects of the tourist experience that are added to the main service (additional product).

Travel for educational purposes is one of the main motivations for youth tourism (WTO, 2016). Student travel is recognised as an increasingly important economic factor (WTO, 2016). However, academic research in this area is still limited (Lampl, 2018) because, on the one hand, it is a broad and complicated area' (Ritchie et al., 2003) and on the other hand there is 'a lack of consensus regarding the nature and scope of educational tourism' (McGladdery & Lubbe, 2017).

Travel during student mobility is best associated with educational and youth tourism. Youth tourism can be interpreted as an age group or a market niche (e.g., backpackers) or simply treated as student travel. Richards (2004) stated that youth tourism is usually seen as student tourism, which is mostly limited to people studying full-time, and explained that travel by people of a certain age group studying at a higher education institution is seen as student and youth tourism. While studying abroad, students engage in various forms of tourism such as volunteering, work and travel, cultural exchange, ecotourism, sports and adrenaline tourism, even though their main motive is still education (Moisa, 2010, Lesjak et al., 2020).

An example of educational tourism is students studying abroad, but only if they study abroad for less than a year (UNWTO, 2008). Huang (2008) further emphasises that the whole experience of international students should be taken into account, not just the academic experience, and that they should not be defined only as students, and that travel plays an essential role in their choice. Consequently: 'the whole international student experience—touching, smelling, hearing, tasting and also seeing—in foreign countries, perfectly matches the tourism as an embodied practice argument' (Huang 2008, p. 1008).

An example of educational tourism is also students participating in the Erasmus+ mobility programme (Lesjak, Juvan & Podovšovnik, 2020), which is becoming more popular every year. Initially, exchange students travel to a foreign country, then they make their way both in the host country and in neighbouring countries (Lesjak et al., 2020; Martinez-Roget, Pawlowska & Rodríguez, 2013; Gardiner, King & Wilking 2013; Pavlič & Koderman, 2014); they take on the role of tourists.

Students who go abroad also benefit from interactions with locals and international people, as well as experiences that promote personal and professional development (Tomasi et al., 2020). Exchange students are tourists who can also visit tourist sites and take trips to other destinations (Huang, 2008).

Educational tourism is becoming increasingly popular in many world regions, especially in Europe (Khosrow-Pour, 2014). Eurostat statistics on learning mobility counted 1.3 million foreign students studying at tertiary level in the EU-27 in 2018 (Eurostat, 2020). 23% of these students chose Germany for their studies, 17% studied in France and 8% went to Italy or the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2020). A large proportion, 44%, of foreign students who studied in the EU-27 countries came from Europe (Eurostat, 2020). In the OECD area, statistics show that in 2018, 3.9 million foreign students at tertiary level crossed the border to study abroad. (OECD, 2021). Among them, Europe was the second most important region of origin with 23% of all international mobile students, perhaps due to the Erasmus mobility program. From a broader perspective, there were 5.6 million foreign students at tertiary level worldwide in 2018 (OECD, 2021).

## **1.2 Historical retrospect of educational tourism**

### **1.2.1 Ancient times**

Travel abroad for the purpose of study and gaining experience began before the Middle Ages. In ancient times, travel began with the purpose of studying, acquiring new skills, and expanding one's horizons, including learning about other cultures when travelling to gain knowledge about other civilizations (Klooster, 2014). Academies in ancient Hellas can initially be seen as precursors to the later European universities (Mikonya, 2014). Students from all over the world were already coming to the Athenian school, most of them were of Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Arab nationalities (Mikonya, 2014). Even Plato, who founded his own academy in Athens in 387, frequently travelled to Egypt and Italy for educational purposes. Pythagoras reportedly travelled extensively and visited the East and even Egypt where he was able to expand his geometric knowledge (Mikonya, 2014). The educational system of ancient Rome in the 2nd and 3rd centuries BC was similar to that of ancient Greece, and with the development of infrastructure such as roads, legal systems, and inns, also allowed for travel for trade, adventure, and pleasure (Cook, Yale, & Marqua, 2009). As an example of educational travel in ancient Rome, Libanius Greek rhetorician went from Hellenic Antioch (now on the border of Syria and Turkey) to study in Athens in 336 AD (Merhav, 2019). Emperor Julian is another example, who studied in Pergamon and Ephesus in 337, familiarised himself with Neoplatonism and listened to Priscus' lectures at the Academy of Athens (Havas, Hegyi & Szabó, 2007).

### **1.2.2 The Middle Ages**

Among the travellers of the Middle Ages were wanderers who wanted to enrich their acquired knowledge in a foreign land, so they travelled to different cities where they could deepen their knowledge with different craftsmen (Mikonya, 2014). The wanderers could not return to their homeland until they had completed a journey of several years. After that, they



had to make what was called a masterpiece to become a full-fledged member of the artisans' and merchants' association. According to Raffay (2011), this custom was much more obligatory from the 15th century onwards and lasted until the end of the trade associations. Sources show that in the 15th century, itinerants preferred to travel to neighbouring provinces and then, later, in the 16th century, they began to visit areas farther from their homes (Raffay, 2011; Mikonya, 2014).

Travelling for the purpose of experiencing and learning could probably be associated with the 'first recorded tourist', the 15th century's Cyriacus of Ancona (Cook et al., 2009). Cyriacus of Ancona travelled the Mediterranean Sea with the desire to learn more about and experience Greek and Roman history (Belozerskaya, 2010).

The year 1517 brought great changes to Europe. The teachings of Martin Luther created a new era both in the field of religion, sciences, education and culture. For example, through peregrination, which is prolonged travel abroad to learn, many students were exposed to the ideologies of the Western world (Fekete, 2017). Young people were also able to study at nearby foreign universities (Fekete, 2017).

The life of the traveling students of the Reformation period was not all learning. This fact is evidenced because for the wealthy patrons and institutions that funded their studies, education alone may not have been worth the high cost, but on the other hand, the possibility of these students bringing home news and also making new connections abroad already gave a more compelling reason for support (Szögi & Kiss, 2003).

The desire to learn from and experience other cultures raised awareness of the educational benefits of travel and soon led to the era of Grand Tour (1660-1820) (Cook et al., 2009). Since the XVI. Century, with the onset of modern civilization, the reorganization of class relations, the rise of leisure and discretionary income, a process has begun that enabled the democratization of tourism and led to the formation of the Grand Tour, which is particularly important for cultural tourism (Rátz, 2011). The main goal of the Grand Tour was to visit and discover different cultural and historical places. The participants of the trip were mainly rich, aristocratic English young people who traveled to Europe for two years to discover sites with different cultural backgrounds. The main stops on the route, which represented the cultural and intellectual development of Europe, were Paris, Rome, Venice, Florence, and later Naples and Pompeii. Several researchers have already noted that the Grand Tour can be considered as a predecessor of the Erasmus program, where students were more like travelers, as only a few of them had the opportunity to study in an institution (Szentpáli-Ujlaki, 2007; Van der Wende, 2010; Juvan, 2011; Lesjak, 2011).

### 1.2.3 Between the Grand Tour and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century

Educational travel also had an increasing popularity between the 18th and 19th centuries (Niblett, 2021). Educational tourism in Europe changed in terms of travellers and learning

materials due to changes driven by philosophies, further political and economic needs in the 18th and 19th centuries (Niblett, 2021). However, the belief that the experience gained through travel was educational prevailed in European thought and practice (Niblett, 2021).

Educational travel increased in the nineteenth century as increasingly wealthy young women and older working men took shorter trips around the continent for educational and recreational purposes and the expansion of railroads and steamships beginning in the 1840s made international travel more accessible to the middle and working classes (Newmeyer, 2008). These trips were promoted by great reformers who thought that travel could be educational, also Thomas Cook, one of them who founded his still famous travel agency with the aim of harnessing the educational potential of travel by turning it into a commercial product that average consumers could buy (Newmeyer, 2008).

At the Paris Exhibition of 1900, all the principles based on educational forms of tourism were present: educational stands -summer school-, tourist attractions -displays- and inspiration for progress -ideas conveyed through displays and school- with several organized lectures (Saint, 1992).

#### 1.2.4 The time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire

The Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918) was a fertile period for mobilities (Szögi & Kiss, 2003). In Hungary, the era of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy played a prominent role in the development of science and culture, as the Hungarian scientific institutional network was formed during this period (Szögi & Kiss, 2003). During this period, the number of Hungarian students attending international higher education institutions was also very high and also exceeded 17,000 people (Szögi & Kiss, 2003). The research of Patyi, Simon, Szabó, Szögi, & Varga (2015) revealed that between 1890 and 1919 almost every fifth university student attended a foreign university or/and acquired European knowledge in part-time form.

During Austro- Hungarian Empire the most popular destinations for students in Austria-Hungary were Vienna and Prague, while abroad were Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands (Patyi et al., 2015). According to data from Eurostat (2013), Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries [OPEC] (2017), Universities and Colleges Admissions Service [UCAS] (2017) and the US Institute of International Education (Eduline, 2017), Austria is still one of the most popular destinations for Hungarian students in terms of higher education abroad. If we compare these countries with the data representing the period of the Dual Monarchy, we can see that Austria and Germany remain the most popular destinations among Hungarian students. What can be the reason for the popularity of these countries for such a long time? In these two countries, education is almost free with minimal registration costs (Szabó, 2015).

### 1.2.5 Between 1919 and 1987

Educational tours became widespread and thematic itineraries were also established in Europe in the early 20th century (Rodionova & Erokhina, 2019). This allowed tourists to visit landscapes, learn about interesting historical destinations, and enjoy natural objects scattered throughout Europe (Zorin & Kvartalnov, 2003). The basis of educational tourism in the 20th century consisted mainly of trips made by scientists, researchers, geographers, historians, merchants and representatives of trade, so these professionals had the most opportunities to make scientific discoveries, observations and descriptions about their travels (Rodionova & Erokhina, 2019).

In the late 20th century, people were able to travel further than ever before, but their true limit lies in traveling smarter - converting fragments of information into real knowledge that can then be applied to build cross-cultural relationships, cultivate understanding, and address the most pressing issues facing people (Fussel, 1980).

## 1.3 Motivations for participating in the educational tourism

Van Hoof & Verbeeten (2005), Bracht et al. (2006), Altbach & Knight (2007), González Mesanza, & Mariel (2011) and Ingraham & Peterson (2014) note that the main motivations for educational tourism are self-development, career advancement, gaining international experience, learning languages, building a career and the compulsion to adapt to the future employer. Teichler & Janson (2007) state that study abroad is not only considered valuable from an academic, cultural and linguistic point of view, but is also expected to have a positive impact on future employment and work. Several authors have classified participants in the Erasmus program according to what they prioritize - professional or personal development (Button, Green, Tegnah, Johansson & Baker, 2005; Crăciun, Orosz & Proteasa, 2020; Di Pietro 2015; 2019; Frisch, 1990; Shieh, 2004; Lanzendorf & Kehm, 2010; Stone & Petrick, 2013; Wiers-Jenssen & Try, 2005). Students are motivated to participate in student mobility to have better chances of entering the job market (Crăciun et al., 2020).

The educational effects of travel have been documented in the work of a variety of experts (Casella, 1997; Falk et al., 2012; LaTorre, 2011; Steves, 2009). Travel expands the mind as individuals learn from and interpret experiences (Casella, 1997; Falk et al., 2012; LaTorre, 2011; Steves, 2009). From an educational perspective, travel allows students to have direct experiences with society, gain real and cultural knowledge, be in harmony with others, and understand the meaning of education through their travels (Stone & Petrick, 2013). A manuscript on the educational benefits of travel experiences concluded that the educational benefits of travel experiences tend to have the greatest impact on individuals (Stone & Petrick, 2013).

Mizsur (2015) raised an important question about Erasmus+ funded projects in a newspaper article, 'How can you take a free holiday from the European Union money?'. This question

leads to the motivation of travel. In addition to the travel that students undertake during their mobility abroad, they usually receive visits, namely from their family and friends. Asiedu (2008) stated that visiting friends and relatives [VFR] travel is one of the most important motivators in tourism.

Diverse studies have already been conducted on the various motivations of students and it is worthwhile to conduct further research with a larger number of samples and combine it with the social background of students. Other researchers have collected the motivational factors for educational tourism and visualised them in a table (Tomasi et al., 2020; Stone & Petrick, 2013). Table 1 shows the motivations for educational tourism and the authors who defined them to get a better understanding of the motivators.

*Table 1: Motivational factors for educational tourism*

| Motivators  | Authors   |
|---|---|
| 'A search for new experiences'.   | Lesjak et al. (2015)<br>Sanchez, Fornerino, & Zhang (2006)<br>Taylor & Rivera (2011)                      |
| 'A good opportunity to travel'.   | Sanchez, Fornerino, and Zhang (2006)<br>Van Hoof (2006)   |
| 'To live in or learn about another culture'.  | Van Hoof (2006)   |
| 'The desire to be somewhere different'.   | Lesjak et al. (2011)  |
| 'Exposure to a different culture/language'.   | Doyle et al. (2010)   |
| 'Desire for personal growth and increased independence'.                                      | Glover (2011); Castillo Arredondo, Rodriguez Zapatero, Pérez Naranjo, & López-Guzmán (2018)               |
| 'Wish to immerse themselves in another culture and language'.                                 | Chew & Croy (2011); Lee (2014); Abubakar et al. (2014); Liang, Caton, K. & Hill (2015)                    |
| 'Gaining academic knowledge'.   | Lam et al. (2011)   |
| 'Understanding of the host country'.  | Sie, Phelan, & Pegg (2018)  |
| 'Living a complete social experience'.  | Huang (2008); Sie et al. (2018)   |
| 'Future opportunities given by study abroad, also about professional and career development'. | Glover (2011); Nyaupane et al. (2011); Lam et al. (2011); Abubakar et al. (2014); Tashlai & Ivanov (2014) |

*Adopted from Stone & Petrick, 2013; Tomasi (2020).*

The literature suggests that the motivation of students from different backgrounds to participate in Erasmus+ programs and other exchange programs certainly depends on the following factors (Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, De Wit & Vujic, 2013; Stroud, 2010):

- the financial situation,
- the economic situation of the home country,
- the educational opportunities in the home country,
- the duration of available exchange programs,
- other cultural factors.

#### **1.4 Factors influencing the choice of educational tourism destination**

Tourist behaviour usually involves the choice of destination, accommodation, infrastructure and activities at the destination, as well as the use of booking tools (Lesjak, Juvan & Podovšovnik, 2020). In addition, tourists look for tourism services through which they can relax and feel relieved (Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven & Vingerhoets, 2010; Gorenak, 2019).

Marinescu (2017) found that students' decision making when faced with the choice of their foreign host institution is similar to tourists' choices regarding their particular holiday destinations. The choice of a particular destination also depends on the image of the destination (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Sirakaya, Sonmez, & Choi, 2001; Um & Crompton, 1999; Woodside & King, 2001), specific attractions at the destination, weather, friendly locals, and experiences (Dann, 1981).

Student choice also depends on their budget (Lesjak et al., 2015). Pope, Shanka, & Ali-Knight (2002) found that students' financial situation as well as the standard of living in the home country are influencing factors, in addition, the cost of living abroad is also important in choosing a host country. Marinescu (2017) found that in addition to the cost of living and climate, social activities and excursions organized by the host college are aspects that students consider.

Students, and especially Erasmus students, travel through the Erasmus exchange mobility scheme, which also financially supports students in choosing tourism alternatives (e.g. the Erasmus scholarship and additional grants that financially support students' travel-related choices). Despite the large number of international students, there are several barriers to Erasmus and other student mobilities that are not limited to a few countries (Souto-Otero et al., 2013; Teichler, 1996, 2004; Teichler & Janson, 2007). At the top of these barriers are financial circumstances, especially the lack of adequate financial support (Bartha, S. Gubik, & Réthi, 2017). Teichler, Ferencz, Wächter, Rumbley & Bürger (2011) viewed increasing financial support as an incentive to participate in the program. As several recent studies have shown, the most common reason why students decide not to participate in higher education exchange because they do not have sufficient financial background and the amount of

scholarships often does not cover all costs incurred (Kottmann, Vossensteyn, Kolster, Veidemane, Blasko, Biagi et al., 2019; Schnepf & Colagrossi, 2020). Student choice also depends on their budget (Lesjak et al., 2015). Pope, Shanka, & Ali-Knight (2002) found that students' financial situation as well as the standard of living in the home country are influencing factors, in addition, the cost of living abroad is also important in choosing a host country.

Marinescu (2017) further noted that the criteria for choosing a host country typically include the general attractiveness of the destination country, along with other factors such as the language spoken, the similarity of the curriculum to the home college and recommendations from former Erasmus students, relatives. Michael et al. (2004) also notes that some students invite their family and/or friends to visit them while studying abroad.

In order to understand the travel patterns that correlate with participation in an educational experience at a foreign destination, it is important to have an overview of the overall tourism activity (Michael et al., 2004). Students may gather information about tourism destinations from a variety of sources. Michael et al. (2004) studied that students are more likely to learn about tourism destinations through word-of-mouth from their friends than through traditional travel information sources. Country presentation events and international evenings as part of the Erasmus program can have an impact on students as they have the opportunity to visit a country 'virtually', taste its flavours, hear its language and music during the presentations. The success of these promotional activities can be seen in the fact that many students are already planning to visit the countries and cities presented, visiting friends and exploring the city together during or at the end of the program. When visiting foreign friends known from student mobility, sightseeing is typically carried out by the (Erasmus) friend(s) from the particular country who knows the destination well and the places where locals eat, drink, shop and have fun. Consequently, the destination is seen not only through the eyes of a tourist, but through the eyes of a local, which makes it easier to engage with their daily life in order to feel at home in a foreign destination as soon as possible (Strachan, 2002).

In addition to the obligatory country presentations during the mobility, participants of the program can also give their own presentations about their Erasmus semester in order to promote the mobility, convince other students and share their (good) experiences, thus influencing other future participants of the mobilities. The organizers of the Erasmus programs regularly announce different competitions and calls for entries, where students can, for example, write a description of their chosen destination and their own experience. This also allows former exchange students to promote specific cities and regions and to pass on first-hand information to students interested in a particular destination and/or institution, thus influencing other students' choices.

## **1.5 Educational tourists expenditures and contribution to tourism**

Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1994) and Generation Z (born between 1994 and today), including Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000), can all be considered youth travellers, so their travel experiences could be interpreted as youth tourism (Cavagnaro & Staffieri, 2018). The UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation (2016) noted that about 30 percent of the world's population is made up of Generation Z and designated about 29 million international travellers for this group worldwide. It is important to consider these generations because in addition to their current participation in youth tourism, they are the influencers and the travellers of the future.

Young travellers are central to the future of tourism as large numbers of young people participate in tourism (Richards, 2006; UNWTO and WYSE Travel Confederation, 2016). Youth and student travellers represent an increasingly significant market for destinations (WTO, 2016). In 2019, 15-29 year old travellers accounted for an estimated 23% of all international travellers and contributed nearly US\$330 billion in tourism receipts (Töre, 2020). Thus, more and more countries and regions have realised that attracting young travellers can bring great benefits to the destination, as this target group is often able to travel longer and spend more money overall than travellers from older generations.

The economic impact of youth tourism, such as educational tourism, relates not only to daily spending levels or the price category of youth travel accommodations, but to the combination of longer stays, more extensive travel, the desire for local services, and the likelihood of attracting more tourists and returning to the destination later (Richards, 2016).

In 2014, the WYSE Travel Confederations' Millennial Traveller study looked at young tourists' spending and found that they spend an average of € 1,591 on their main trips, compared to their spending in 2013 when they spent €950 on a trip. Young people spend up to two-thirds more on average as they travel for significantly longer periods compared to other tourists. Based on UNWTO forecasts of international tourism growth, the WTO estimated in 2016 that some 370 million youth travellers will be responsible for US\$330 billion in spending by 2020. The estimated amount may decrease significantly due to the COVID-19-health crisis.

WYSE Travel Confederation research has found that young tourists tend to spend most of their travel budget (60%) directly in local communities, so they have a greater economic impact on their chosen destination. There is also a tendency for young tourists to try to choose local suppliers, which reduces economic leakage while driving more spending to local businesses (WTO, 2016). Moreover, young tourists not only spend money, which supports local employment in tourism, but they also sometimes work during their stay abroad.

For international exchange students, studying abroad is not only an opportunity to experience international education or the culture of a country abroad, but also to visit the attractions

and surrounding destinations (WTO, 2016). The results of a survey conducted by Erasmus Student Network [ESN] in 2015 show that exchange students are very willing to travel, especially for cultural reasons, and they travel not only in their host country but also in neighbouring countries (Escrivá et al., 2015). Moreover, more than 18,000 exchange students have travelled to more than six different countries on average during their 6-month mobility, thus influencing the travel markets of neighbouring countries. In addition, most exchange students also received visitors during their mobility - about 4.1 visitors who generated additional tourism expenditure.

Total tourism travel expenditures are made by or on behalf of visitors for and during their travel and stay at their destination and are comprised of the following broad categories: transport, accommodation, food and drink in cafés or restaurants and other expenditure (Eurostat, 2011). In general, exchange students spend money on the following things during their stay abroad: accommodation, tickets to museums, organised excursions, sightseeing, bus, train and plane tickets to another city, wine tasting, special dinners, tickets to sports games or festivals, etc. Michael et al (2004) pointed out several activities that are preferred by international students: dining out, visiting festivals, national parks, art, visiting museums, and entertainment. Field trips and excursions organised and promoted by the host university, ESN, other university associations and individual trips also contribute to tourism expenditure. Nugroho & Soeprihanto (2016) also noted that international students also enjoy tourism through their stay and study abroad while contributing to the local economy through their expenditure on transportation, visiting cultural sites, eating and drinking in restaurants and buying local food.

As a result of young travellers visiting Erasmus colleagues abroad, and later when the Erasmus colleagues visit the home country of the aforementioned young travellers, the generation of additional guest nights and tourism expenditure by the visiting friends can be noted. An additional effect can thus be felt both in the traveller's country and in the foreign destinations visited before and after, and sometimes even in the transit countries.

Youth tourism actors typically have lower disposable incomes. Richards (2005) noted that students are typically perceived as a low-income market that requires special arrangements regarding discounted tourism services. On the other hand, youth tourists have more time for leisure, so they may visit a destination for a longer period of time, but typically choose low-cost services or alternatives that are more cost-effective to them.

## **1.6 The importance of youth tourism and educational tourism**

Lampl (2018) noted that Erasmus students, who are educational tourists, also contribute significantly to the tourism industry in Europe. Using Italy and the UK as examples, Borgioli & Manuelli (2013) calculated the economic impact (value added) of international students in host countries by type of expenditure (programme, student and visitor) and by production sector, not limited to education. Value added was highest in education (46.9%), then real



estate activities (12%), shops and repairs (6.9%), accommodation (5.8%), transport (4%), food and drink (1.3%), arts and entertainment (1.2%). and other sectors (7.7%).

Travelling while studying or working abroad brings some new challenges for educational institutions and related industries, so it is worth considering for travel suppliers to develop products tailored to the needs of exchange students (WTO, 2016). In addition to the positive impact on individuals, student mobilities, such as the Erasmus programme, have the potential to make a significant economic, environmental and social contribution within Europe and beyond.

Many countries do not have specific policies for student and youth tourism, however, increasing attention is being paid to certain niches within the overall market, e.g.: student travel, volunteer tourism, language tourism and cultural exchanges (Richards, 2005; United Nations, 2010).

Among young people, including those participating in Erasmus and other exchange programs, environmental protection and sustainability are very important. They are characterized by a broadened horizon. McGladdery & Lubbe (2017) discovered an element not considered by other scholars by asking whether educational tourism includes so-called ecotourism.

In addition to the many positive effects, however, the downsides of tourism should not be forgotten, which include also the negative effects of the students traveling abroad. Due to the increased volume of tourists and the decadent lifestyle of the young people, conflicts may arise between the locals and the exchange students and also the tourists visiting them (Patyi et al., 2015). Complaints from locals are common, such as the students being too noisy, messy, careless, disrespectful to the locals and the local culture, and that, like the tourists, they leave their rubbish on the mobility site (Szögi & Kiss, 2003; Mester, 2008).

As mentioned earlier, educational tourism also has benefits for host countries, both in economic and social contexts. International student programs and mobility provide more opportunities for local entrepreneurs, economic benefits for small businesses, and employment opportunities for local populations (Mitchell, 2015; Tomasi et al., 2020). Orphanidou & Nachimas (2011) and Rezapouraghdam, Behraves, Ari, & Doh (2018) argued among the benefits that international students bring to Northern Cyprus that they spend on food and transportation and do more business with travel agencies. International students are a significant source of income for host destinations and contribute to the local economy with their daily living expenses (OECD, 2017; Amaro, Barroco, Martins, & Antunes, 2019). Among other authors (Borgioli & Manuelli, 2013), Obrien & Mojdeh (2013) also noted that ‘international students can contribute to the local economy through:

- on-campus spending directly related to their studies;
- off-campus spending on housing, food, books, transportation, clothing and entertainment;

- contribution to the local tourism industry through domestic travel and other tourist activities;
- non-educational tourism spending by students, VFR and the return visits of alumni.'

Subsequent storytelling and sharing of one's experience by exchange students works like word-of-mouth advertising. This allows even more people to visit a particular destination (which may have been less known but already discovered). As a long-term consequence of youth tourism, the quality of products and infrastructure can also be improved. All in all, student mobilities, such as the Erasmus programme, directly and indirectly support tourism, the economy and can generate wealth growth.

Weaver (2008) found in a research that all international students in a sample group visited local tourist attractions or travelled to other regions, mainly on their own initiative. According to Asiedu (2008), VFR can also have a significant impact on the local economy as students usually make trips to the specific destination and also to nearby regions. The type of tourism examined has a great potential to generate local wealth through proper jobs and higher incomes (International Labour Office, 2019).

Exchange students generate a special need for local services. Exchange students in a mobility destination generate additional business and employment opportunities related to student spending at the local level. In some cases, new services are built to respond to students' needs for housing, cultural activities, and leisure and entertainment opportunities (Tomasi et al., 2020). So it is definitely worthwhile for entrepreneurs and local businesses to take advantage of the aforementioned niche market.

The benefits of international student mobilities show up both for the host country and in the lives of the exchange students. The host country can benefit from the exchange students' expenditures on accommodation, utilities, transportation, food and drink, entertainment and recreational activities, and in some cases, tuition fees and taxes paid (OECD, 2017).

Youth was one of the main targets of the EU's Europe 2020 strategy, which aimed to increase opportunities to study and/or work abroad through the EU's Youth on the Move initiative (Buffa, 2015). Youth mobility is promoted worldwide through the WYSE Travel Confederation, which is an affiliate of the UNWTO (UNWTO, 2021). Data from UNWTO (2008) and WYSE Travel Confederation (2014) show the current and future importance of young travellers - in quantitative terms (size of the segment, growth in tourist flows) and in terms of their purchasing power. The increasing importance of this market segment is also underlined by the strategic alliance formed in 2014 between the UNWTO and the WYSE Travel Confederation, which aims to strengthen cooperation on projects that broaden the understanding of the youth, student and educational travel sector (Buffa, 2015). Despite the importance of the aforementioned segment, there is a gap in knowledge regarding travel motivations and behaviours (Moscardo & Beckendorff, 2010).

Young travellers are often seen as trendsetters as they make undiscovered destinations fashionable and more accessible (WTO, 2016). Another value of this segment is the 'lifetime value' which they provide to destinations during their travels, as tourists often return to destinations they have previously visited.

Global demographic changes and rising incomes in developing countries are likely to increase the number of internationally mobile students (WTO, 2016). In the future, the education market is expected to grow steadily, with the British Council estimating that the total number of enrolled higher education students worldwide (including those studying in their home country) will increase by 21 million between 2011 and 2020, from 178 to 199 million. In addition, destinations that facilitate youth tourism can attract young talent and professionals by introducing them to places they might like to re-locate themselves (WTO, 2016). Young travellers can also attract other visitors and/or businesses to a particular destination they visit. They bring atmosphere and 'buzz' to destinations so that they attract even more people or service providers (WTO, 2016). This effect is already being recognised in several cities as there are a growing number of projects aiming to relocate university facilities to city centres to work as creative and cultural hubs, a great example is Bristol in the UK (Universities UK, 2017; UWE Bristol; n.d.).

This market is one of the most resilient ones. It has been noted by the WTO (2016) that young tourists are relatively undaunted and are unlikely to be frightened by epidemics, economic or political crises. A survey conducted by WYSE Travel Confederation on youth tourists' opinion on the Ebola outbreak in 2014 showed that this global health issue had little impact on youth travel plans. Youth travel markets are less volatile than the overall tourism market, as evidenced by the findings of WYSE Youth Travel Industry Monitor that the youth segment declined less and recovered faster from the economic crisis than mainstream tourism during 2009 and 2010. In the case of COVID -19 Generation Z is the youngest that has suffered the most economically, however they are less concerned about health risks, the lack of disposable income limits their ability to travel freely (YouGov, 2021). The oldest generations (so the Traditionalists and Baby Boomers) are at the other extreme, having more savings due to less spending in the last year (2020), but also more concerns about risk. Millennials and Generation X are in the middle, as they are confident about travelling, have a 'lack of immediate health risks, and on average can finance multiple trips in the months and years to come. Thus, it is clear that young travellers are the largest segment that will travel now and in the near future (coming months and years) and thus represent a very important segment.

## **2 ERASMUS AND ERASMUS + PROGRAMME**

### **2.1 The history of the Erasmus program**

As Erasmus students make up a large proportion of participants in international student mobility and therefore educational tourism, this chapter briefly describes the Erasmus program. ERASMUS stands for European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (European Commission, 2003). The name of the program, in addition to the English acronym, commemorates the famous 16th century traveling philosopher and humanist scholar, Erasmus of Rotterdam. Erasmus worked and lived in several European countries with the aim of expanding his knowledge and deepening his horizons through various experiences. In his scientific work, the philosopher tried to overcome the backward medieval way of thinking and thus promote the development of science. The Erasmus program resembles this endeavour as it allows students to learn about different cultures, ideas, and ideologies during the program (Augustijn, 1991).

The Erasmus program started in 1987 when the predecessor of today's European Union, the European Communities consisted of only 11 member states and the Iron Curtain still existed. In 1987, 3244 students were already studying part-time in another member state (De Wit, 2012). The number of participants has been growing steadily since the launch of the program (2014). Figure 1 shows the number of Erasmus+ mobilities and scholarships awarded to exchange students by different categories. Most participants took part in higher education student or staff mobility during the period observed (2014–2017).

The Erasmus program began as a student mobility program, but over time it grew beyond its original scope. It enriched the lives of more than 9 million participants with valuable experiences and indirectly influenced the lives of many more people to this day. The 30th anniversary of the Erasmus program coincides with the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, which promoted an ever closer union within Europe (European Commission, 2017).

### **2.2 Erasmus+ program nowadays**

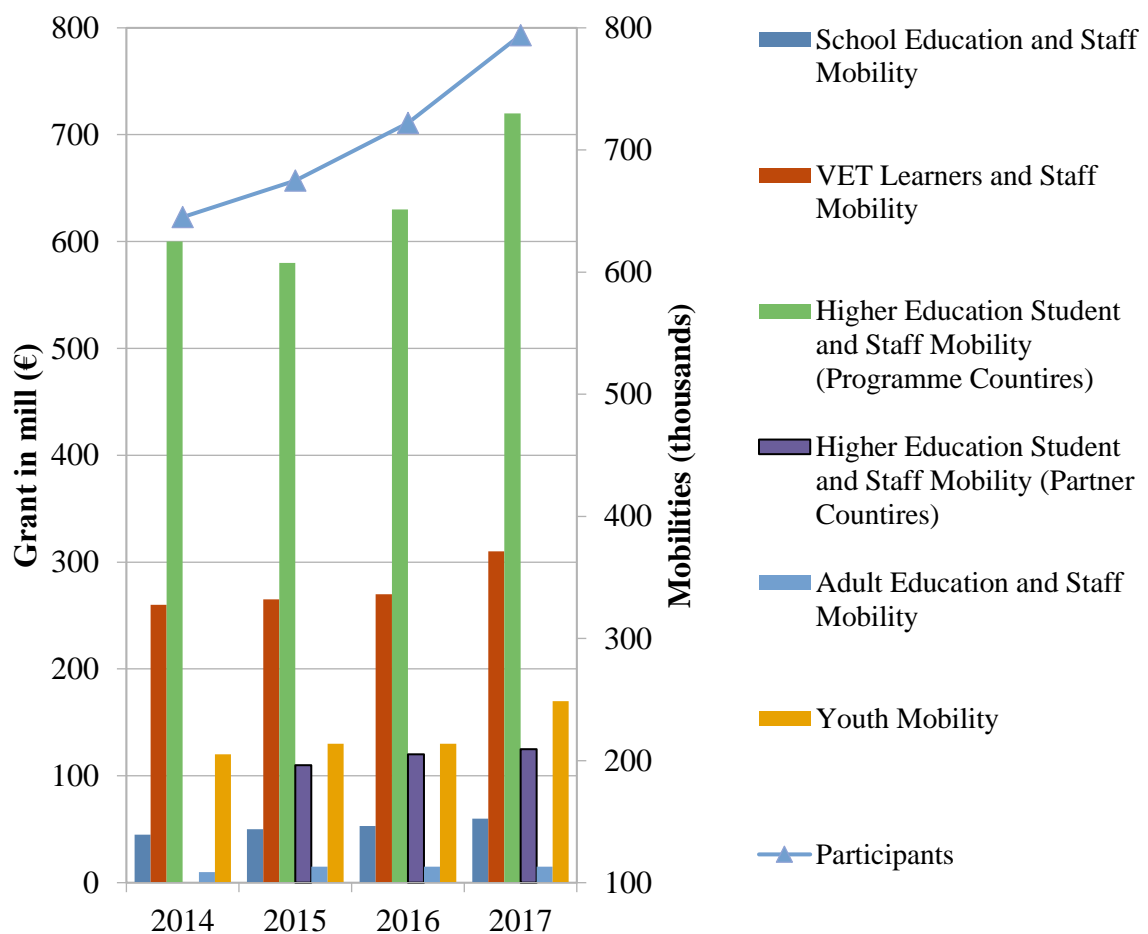
The European Union has developed a number of mobility programs to promote cultural, professional and personal exchanges of experience. The Erasmus program was launched in 1987 and has remained a stand-alone program with its basic objectives, only changing its name to Erasmus + when a new cycle (2014-2020) was launched and followed by another new cycle with the same name between 2021 and 2027. Before the Erasmus program, in the 1980s, several new programs were created. These programs were the Commet, the Petra, the Lingua and the Force program (European Commission, 2006).

In order to accelerate and facilitate European integration and strengthen educational cooperation between member states, the Socrates program (1994-1999) was first launched,

which was extended by the Socrates II program (2000-2006) and later the Lifelong Learning program (2007-2013) was also launched. The Erasmus + program emerged from the Lifelong Learning program in 2014. The decision on the program itself was taken by the European Parliament in 2013 and the European Union allocated a total of 14.7 billion euros to fund the program. In the following cycle (2021-2027), the program then has an estimated budget of €26.2 billion, almost double the funding of its predecessor (2014-2020). The 2021-2027 program focuses on social inclusion, green and digital transition and promoting young people's participation in democratic life (European Commission, 2021).

A great advantage of European Union is that its education and training systems are of a very high standard, as well as the commendable encouragement of youth to expand their creativity and take advantage of international educational opportunities (Vossensteyn, Soo, Cremonini, Antonowitsch & Epping, 2008; Mutlu, Alacahan & Erdih, 2010), in addition, this plays an important role in international higher education (Welzer, Brumen, Udir & Stanjko, 2010).

*Figure 1: Erasmus+ grants by mobility category and total programme participants, 2014-2017.*



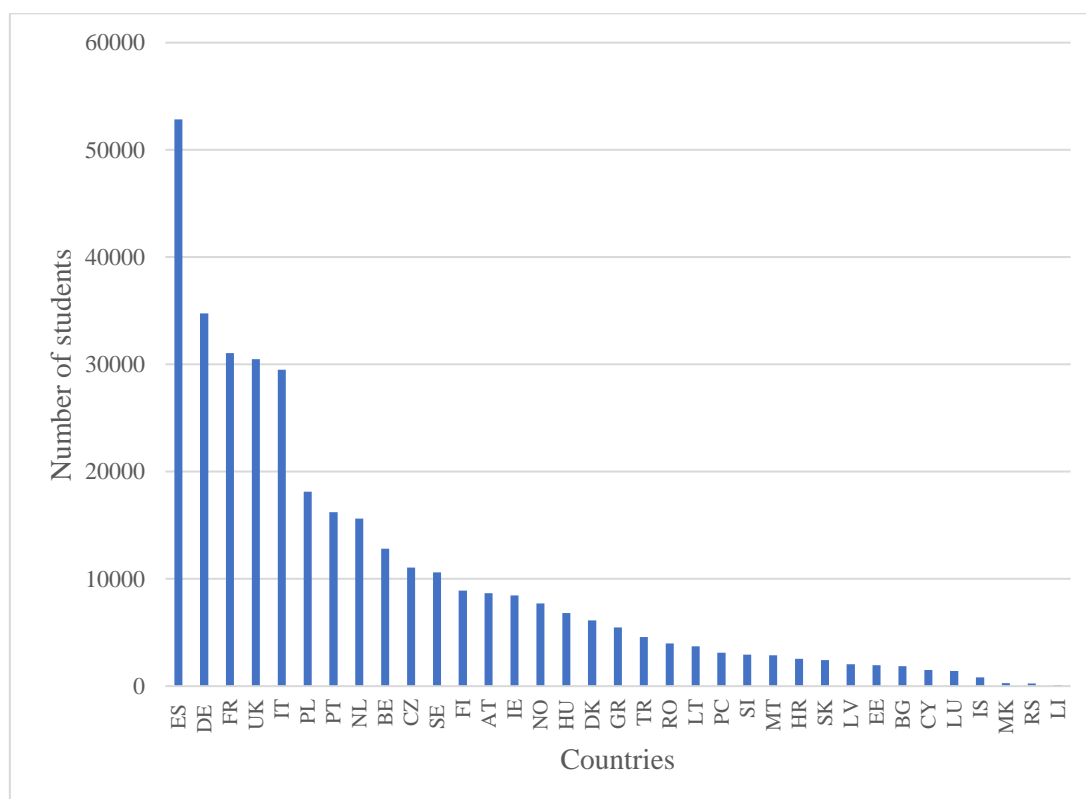
*Note: VET stands for vocational education and training.  
Adapted from European Commission (2018).*

The importance of the Erasmus+ program was underlined by Tibor Navracsics, the former Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport of the European Committee, at the 30th anniversary celebration in Strasbourg: every Erasmus+ scholar gains important experience, both professionally and quite humanly, moreover, 30 years of mobility and cooperation have given Europe an open-minded generation ready to act - it is these 9 million people who will shape the future of today's society - (Navracsics, 2017, 27 March).

The former president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, also stressed the importance of the Erasmus+ program at the ceremony: all the money spent on the program is an investment in the future of every young person and in the European conception, so the ambitions for the future of the program should be multiplied (Juncker, 2017, 13 June).

Looking at OECD (2018) data on international students, Europe is the second largest source region with 845 000 European foreign students. 80% of European students travel to other European countries for study purposes, mainly due to the Erasmus mobility programme, which has enabled nearly 9 million European students and higher education staff to study abroad over the last 34 years (European Commission, 2020). Spain, Germany and France are among the most popular destination countries for Erasmus+ students, according to the Erasmus+ Annual Report 2019, as shown in Figure 2.

*Figure 2: Most popular destination countries among Erasmus+ students in 2018/19*



*Adapted from Erasmus+ annual report (2019).*

Mobility is still the main activity in the latest cycle of the Erasmus+ program (2021-2027) (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2021). Almost 10 million individual students and education staff in different sectors are expected to go on international mobility during the program (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2021). Innovations in the new cycle include the Blended Intensive Programs, which will 'combine online learning and teamwork with short-term physical mobility abroad', the doubled number of short- and long-term vocational training opportunities, which will also be opened to non-European countries, support for mobility in adult education, and the Erasmus Teachers Academies, which will offer training, online and distance learning, including for learners with fewer opportunities (European Commission, 2021).

Many people know Erasmus only as an exchange program for higher education institutions, although it is much more extensive.

The main programs of the Erasmus program to date:

- Grundtvig Program: its aim is to support the education of adults, to provide assistance in education at individual and organizational level, with particular attention to disadvantaged adults, until the period of 2007-2013,
- Leonardo Da Vinci Program: its aim is to support vocational training and develop specialized institutions, the quality of training and study materials in order to increase the competitiveness of the European labour market, until the period of 2007-2013,
- Comenius Program: from pre-school, primary and secondary education, it includes exchange opportunities for students, teachers and institutions, until the period of 2014-2020,
- Youth in Action Program: the focus is on the development of young people's competences, it promotes the acquisition of learning methods and also involves disadvantaged young people, in the period of 2007-2013.
- Jean Monet Program: it aims to support institutions, plans and methods to promote European integration, increase and promote courses in European studies in higher education institutions, in the new cycle of 2021-2027 it is expanded beyond universities to schools and other education and training institutions (European Commission, 2021),
- Erasmus program and later Erasmus + program: the main core is to support the mobility of students and teachers, one of the main objectives is to prepare them for employment (European Commission, 2003; 2017; 2021; Horváth, 2011; Tempus Közalapítvány, 2021).

### 3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

#### 3.1 Research objective

Since exchange students are an important segment of educational tourism, I focus on them in my research. In particular, I investigate what factors influence the choice of exchange students and whether Erasmus and other exchange students also choose their host destination based on the attractiveness of a destination and the available tourism products. Therefore, the main objective of this thesis is to investigate whether students choose their exchange study destination based on nearby tourist attractions and what are the main objectives in the destination choice process. Another objective of this thesis is to examine the travel-related expenditures of those students who participate in student mobility in order to investigate the importance of a particular sub-segment in educational tourism. Another objective is to review the additional tourism revenue generated by exchange students' visitors, returns and destination recommendations. This master thesis focuses on the travel-related motivations and expenditures of exchange students. Since travel-related motivations are of course not the only important factors that go into the decision-making process of choosing a mobility destination, other motives include the cost of living, experiencing a foreign educational system, meeting new people / making new friends, gaining more independence, and learning foreign languages. Since the COVID-19 virus has also affected student exchange, one of the aims of this paper is to monitor the willingness of students to participate in mobility in times of a health crisis.

Those tourism students who choose a popular destination as the destination of their international student exchange are likely to benefit more from their own leisure activities than from formal learning at the host institution (Lesjak et al., 2015). However, according to Lesjak et al. (2015), the well-known tourist destinations can also be seen as a good holiday opportunity promoted by the Erasmus programme scholarship. From the literature above, I propose the first, second and third research questions (Q1, Q2 and Q3).

*Q1: How important are the tourist attractions of the host country in the choice of student mobility destination?*

*Q2: How important is the proximity of other well-known tourist destinations when choosing the student mobility destination?*

*Q3: Is there a group of students for which the tourist attractions (being a tourist destination) are more important than other aspects for choosing the mobility destination? If yes, what is the size of this group?*

According to the literature, the motivation of students from different backgrounds to participate in Erasmus programs and other exchange programs depends on the following factors: their own financial situation, the economic situation of their home country,



educational opportunities in their home country, the duration of available exchange programs, and other cultural factors (Souto-Otero et al., 2013; Stroud, 2010). Thus, the financial situation of the students, as well as the economic situation of the sending country are influencing factors, so that the cost of living in the foreign country can also be decisive for the choice of a host destination.

*Q4: How do living costs influence the choice of the student mobility destination?*

The location of student mobility, so the proximity of tourist attractions, geographical and natural elements, such as coast, mountains from the temporary residence of students can be advantageous from the point of view of travel. Mizsur (2015) criticises the projects funded by Erasmus + by advising how to take a holiday for free from the budget of European Union. There are also some critics of the programme as it could offer holidays for free (Keogh & Russel-Roberts, 2008). Michael et al. (2004) listed several activities that are preferred by international students: dining out, visiting festivals, national parks, arts, visiting museums, and entertainment. The fifth research question is based on the last assumptions.

*Q5: How much money do students spend on tourism-related products and/ or services during their mobility?*

Scholars are still optimistic about the power of international student mobility to maintain its popularity even after the COVID -19 pandemic, as in the situations of the 2003 SARS outbreak and the 2008 economic crisis (Mercado, 2020; Xiong, Mok, Ke, & Cheung, 2021).

*Q6: Will students want to go on student mobility even in times of health crisis, like COVID-19?*

## **3.2 Research methodology and data collection**

### **3.2.1 In-depth interviews**

For creating the online survey, the motivations and expenditures of the students were reviewed from the perspective and experience of the mobility coordinators, using a qualitative method, in-depth interviews with the coordinators. Based on their answers and the literature reviewed I developed the survey questions and got deeper insight to the students' motivations, destination choice, travels during the mobility, tourist expenditures, visitors, returns, and participation willingness during times of a health crisis. Mini-scenario was prepared for the interviews, and after an arrangement in advance, the coordinators were interviewed in person about their mobility-related experiences and opinions.

The interviews were dominated by closed-ended, unstructured questions in order to get the coordinators' views and feelings on the topic as explicitly as possible. The answers obtained

from the interviewees were also used for the questionnaire and later analysed, compared with each other and also with some answers to the students' questionnaires.

In April 2021, I interviewed a student exchange coordinator at the Faculty of Social Work, University of Ljubljana, who will be addressed in the following parts with UL. Another interview was conducted with a coordinator from the University of Graz in Austria, who will later be referred to as UG. The third interview was conducted with a colleague from International Mobility Service at the University of Trieste in Italy, who will be referred to as UT in the following parts. The transcripts of the interviews can be found in Appendix 2. The interviews contributed to the online survey questions.

### 3.2.2 Online questionnaire

To get answers to the research questions, I collected additional primary data. I designed an online questionnaire (Appendix 3). Based on existing literature on youth, educational, and exchange student travel, my survey measured international exchange students' destination choices. It included questions about participation in international student mobility, preferences and motivations in choosing a destination, and spending on tourism products during the exchange program, as well as the usual socio-demographic data.

The questionnaire consists of 5 sections. The first section controls participation. Respondents were asked if they had ever participated in an Erasmus or other student exchange program (dichotomous: yes or no). Then, the academic year of participation was asked (academic years from 2008/2009 or earlier to 2020/2021). The semester chosen for mobility was also checked (winter semester, summer semester or both semesters). For the length of mobility, months from 1 to 12 and other option were offered. Students were asked where they undertook the mobility (city or village, rural area), what was the type of destination chosen (rural or urban area).

The second section deals with the motivation to participate in international student mobility. Respondents were offered 4 different options (becoming more independent, meeting new people, making new friends, learning foreign languages), for each they indicated their level of agreement (1 - strongly disagree, 5 - strongly agree).

The third section examines the importance of the destination attributes at the chosen mobility destination (1 means they disagree with the statement at all, 5 means they completely agree with the statement). This section was used to address the research questions from Q1 and Q4. In this section, students were also asked about the main reasons for choosing their mobility destination, choosing between quality of education, tourist attractions offered, recommendations from friends, recommendations from coordinators, different climate/weather, different culture, only remaining option, other. Destination attributes were measured by safety, air travel, tourist service, infrastructure, and cultural resources, which also appear in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (World Economic Forum,

2019). In conjunction with the destination attributes, the distance of tourist sites from the mobility destination was also reviewed (capital city, coast, historic city, famous museums, UNESCO world heritage site, national park, airport, up to 50 km, between 51 and 100 km, between 101 and 200 km, between 201 and 300 km, more than 301 km or do not know answer).

The fourth section focuses on students' expenses during their stay abroad. Different amounts of money were offered for expenses (accommodation, transport, going out to eat, festivals, culture, other tourist products, other items, up to 20 EUR, between 21 and 50 EUR, between 51 and 100 EUR, between 101 and 200 EUR, more than 200 EUR, or no money spent on the item). This question was used to get answer to the research question Q5. To get a deeper insight and a better ratio, participants were asked how much they would spend monthly on the previously mentioned tourism related items in their home country (about the same amount as abroad, less, more, answer do not know or do not want to answer). Since the mobility of students can result in additional tourism spending if friends or family came to visit, participants were also asked about visitors (friends, family, friends and family, and no one). Similarly, additional tourism spending can be also generated after the Erasmus mobility, therefore participants were asked for what reason they returned to the place of mobility after their exchange (yes, to visit friends, yes, to go on vacation, yes, to work, yes, for all reasons or no). They were also asked if they would return to their place of mobility in the future and why.

The fifth section refers to additional expenditures in tourism due to student mobility and participation willingness in a student exchange during times of crisis. Students were asked about travel before and after mobility, recommendation of mobility destination, and visitors during the mobility to measure, if there are additional spending due to the mobility. Students were questioned about the likelihood of visiting their mobility destination without participating in a student mobility/ Erasmus program (yes, no or maybe). They were asked whether they had recommended their mobility destination to others (yes, to friends, yes, to family, yes, to both, no or maybe) and also about their willingness to recommend in the future, and to whom they would recommend their mobility destination and to whom they would recommend it. Previous visits to the mobility destination before mobility were also asked (yes, with friends, yes, with family, yes, alone, no or answer would not like to answer).

At the end of the fifth section, students were asked if they would participate in Erasmus or other student exchange program even in times of a crisis situation, such as COVID-19 (yes, no, answer do not know or do not want to answer). This question was used to answer Q6 research question.

The questions on preferences included, in particular, questions on the tourist attractiveness of the destination, proximity to tourist attractions of other destinations, as well as information on the cost of living and other factors influencing the decision-making process in choosing a mobility destination. The questionnaire was completed in English. Closed question types

were mainly used in the questionnaire. Among the question types, dichotomous (yes or no), selective, multiple choice, matrix, dropdown, open-ended and scale questions were asked.

First, a pilot study was conducted with the questionnaire among three former Erasmus students. Based on this, small changes were made regarding the vocabulary. The questionnaire was sent via different international mobility coordinators and social media channels (Facebook groups of exchange students) to mainly Slovenian, Austrian, Italian and Hungarian incoming and outgoing exchange students who have already participated or intend to participate in a student mobility programme. These countries were chosen for the reason of convenience sampling and for being neighbouring countries of Slovenia. Also the opinions, motivations and preferences of those could have been analysed, who have not yet participated in a university exchange but are potential future participants. Quantitative data were collected using the self-completion online questionnaire Google Forms and administered in English.

The questionnaire was administered in April 2021 by international relations officers at the University of Ljubljana, University of Graz, University of Trieste and Corvinus University of Budapest. In addition, I used the convenience sampling method and the survey was posted on various social media platforms, such as the Facebook and WhatsApp groups of Erasmus students. Answers were analysed in Excel.

To address the first research question, I checked if on average respondents indicated that tourist attractions in the host country are important when choosing the mobility destination. Since I used 5 point Likert scale, 3 indicated that tourist attractions in the host country are neither important nor unimportant. With the t-test I checked, if the mean of the variable 'importance of tourist attractions offered at the destination' is statistically significantly higher than 3. By the same token to address the second research question, I used t-test to check if the mean of the variable 'importance of tourist attractions offered in the destination's surrounding area' is statistically significantly higher than 3. Similarly was done to address the fourth research question, where I checked, if the mean of the variable 'similar or cheaper living cost' is statistically significantly higher than 3. For the third research question I conducted cluster analysis that will be described in the next chapter. For the fifth and sixth research questions descriptive statistics were used.

### 3.2.3 Cluster analysis

Both in the literature reviewed and in the data analysis I found variability in the students' responses, especially in that some of the exchange students were more interested in tourism and some were less interested. To determine if there are some clusters in the sample and to address Q3 research question, exploratory hierarchical cluster analysis was conducted. Traditional cluster analysis enables the identification of structures (groupings) among complex and multidimensional data (Lilien, Rangaswamy & De Bruyn, 2007). The nearest neighbour method was chosen. In the agglomerative method of single linkage clustering

(which is also referred to as the nearest neighbour method), the distance between clusters is considered to be the distance between the two closest objects in those clusters (Lilien, Rangaswamy & De Bruyn, 2007).

In order to cluster objects, e.g. international exchange students, under certain conditions, systematic methods are needed to reduce the complexity associated with the multiple dimension. Through the multiple dimension, all objects can be described, and the potential combinatorial explosion that can occur when all possible ways are considered to group a large number of objects (Lilien, Rangaswamy & De Bruyn, 2007).

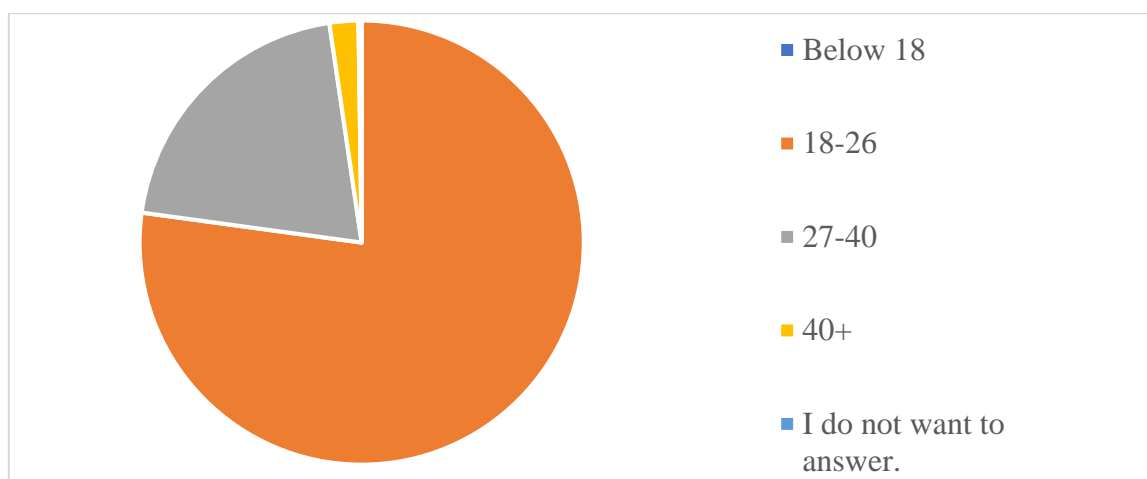
The first step to reduce complexity is to have a metric that characterizes the degree of similarity between the objects to be clustered - i.e., the mobility participants. Usually, a distance metric is used to characterize the similarity. The distance metric compresses a multidimensional space into a single one, namely distance. As a next step, methods are needed to assign elements to different groups based on their degree of similarity (Lilien, Rangaswamy & De Bruyn, 2007).

Twenty-five segmentation variables were included in the hierarchical clustering (Table 3). The first variable was summer, as more tourist activities can be enjoyed during this season, especially in coastal locations. Therefore, it may be more attractive for some students to go on mobility in the spring semester (=summer). The duration of mobility was also included in the variables. Among the items for motivation to go on mobility, the following were included: independence, meeting new people and language. For the reasons for choosing mobility destination, the following variables were used: safe destination, known, recommendation, touristic, close to tourism. For other factors influencing students' choice, distance (far away), similar cost of living, it offers many tourist attractions and/or products were included. Variables used to examine students' tourism expenditure were transportation, accommodation, food, entertainment, festivals, culture, excursions and miscellaneous. To examine additional effects and additional tourism revenue generated, prior visit to the destination (before) and visit from friends and/or family (visits) were included in the variables. To check demographics, gender (female) and age were also included among the segmentation variables.

### **3.3 Sample description**

There were 431 valid responses in the final sample. There was a high completion rate: of the 431 respondents, 429 people answered all questions, or 99.54% of respondents answered all questions. 69.7% of the responding students were female and 29.4% of the students were male. As Figure 3 shows, the majority - 77.2% of respondents - are between 18 and 26 years old. The average age of the sample is 25 years.

Figure 3: Age of the participants

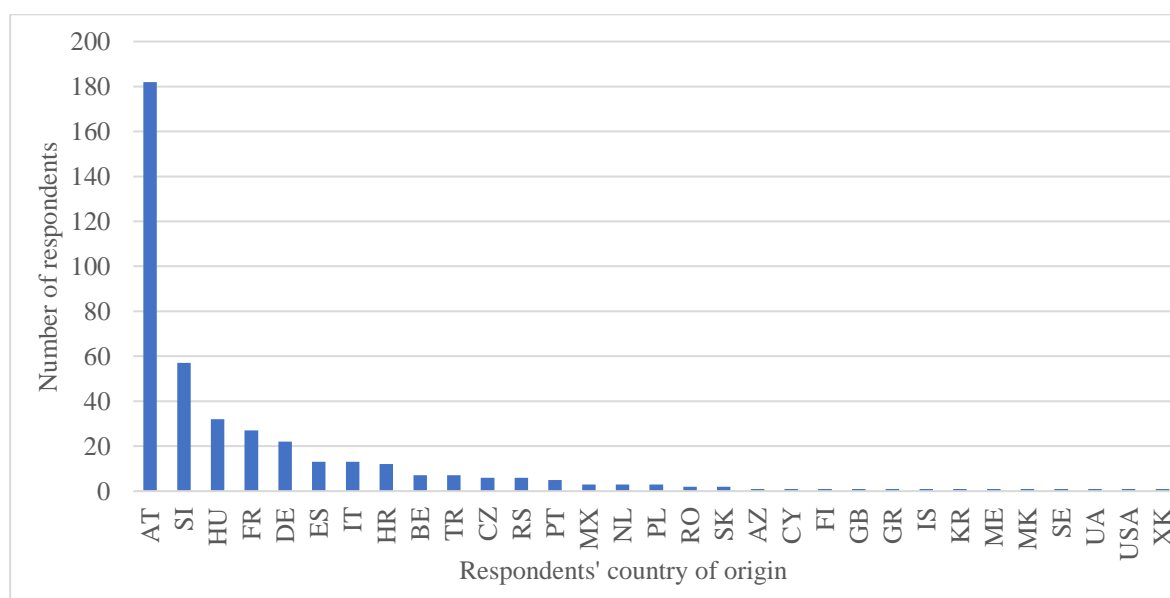


Note:  $n=431$

Source: Own work.

Most of the surveyed students are from Austria (182 persons, 42.2%) and Slovenia (57 persons, 13.2%), but also many students from Hungary (32 persons, 7.4%), France (27 persons, 6.3%), Germany (22 persons, 5.1%), Spain (13 persons, 3%) and Italy (13 persons, 3%) answered the questionnaire (Figure 4). 77.6% of respondents live in an urban area and 22.4% in a rural area.

Figure 4: Origin of the respondents

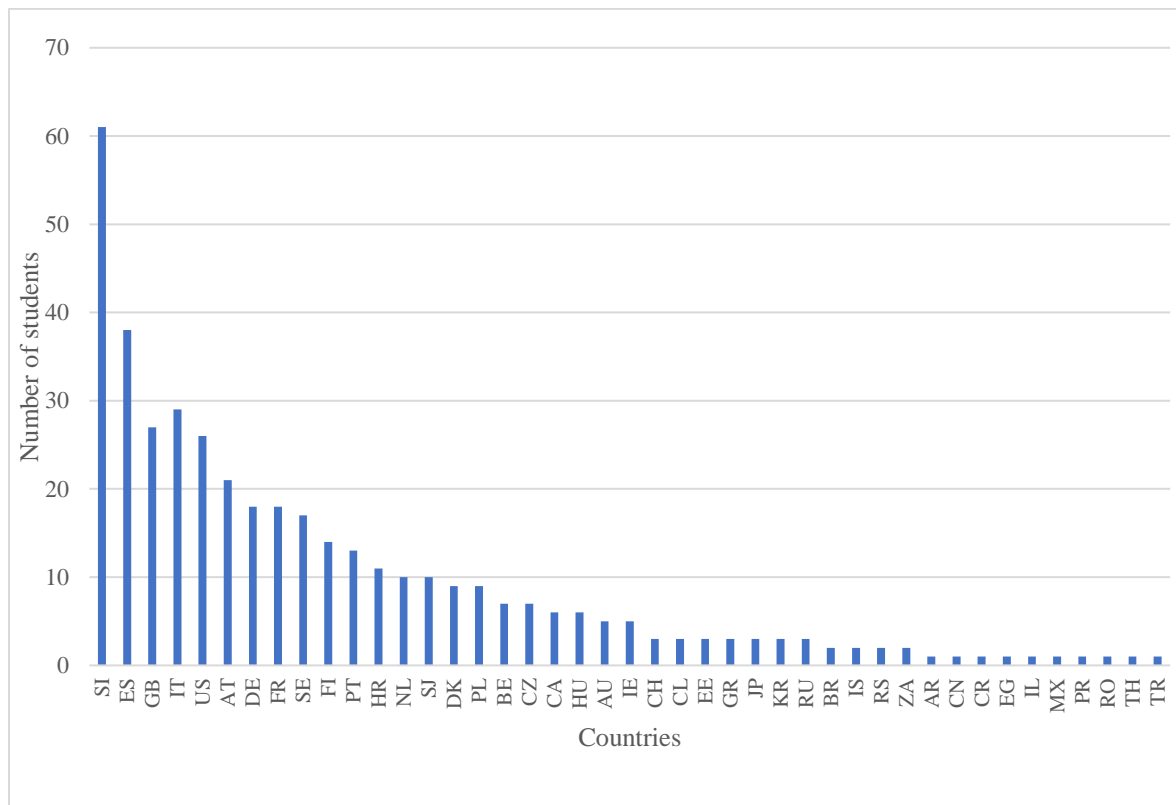


Note:  $n=431$ . Source: Own work.

Figure 5 shows the choice of destination for exchanges. The majority of respondents chose Slovenia (14%), followed by Spain (8.82%), the UK (6.26%) and Italy (6.26%). Spain, UK

and Italy are also among the top 5 receiving Erasmus destinations (see Figure 2). Most of the participants' mobility destinations were in an urban area (88.6%), while only 11.4% were in a rural area.

*Figure 5: Chosen countries for the mobility*



*Note: n=282. Source: Own work.*

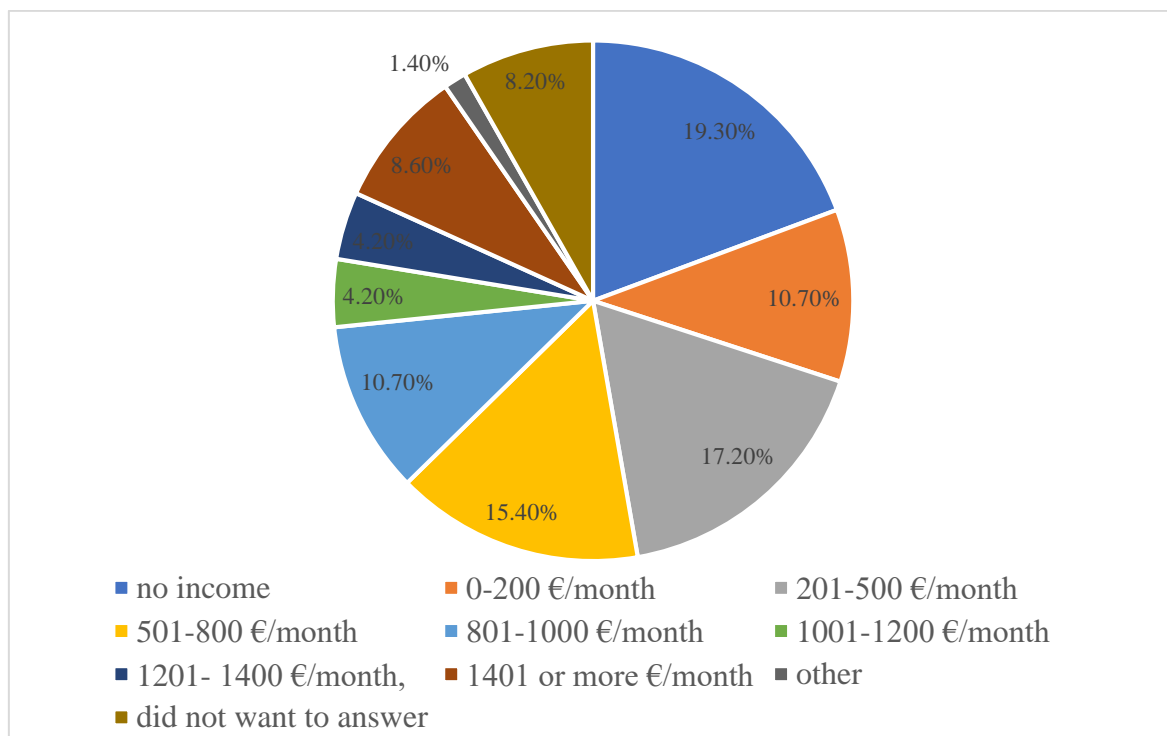
Majority of the respondents 67.1% are currently studying in the university or college, while 32.3% of them have already graduated from the university or college. Majority of the respondents are single (60.8%). 31.7% are in a relationship. 3.7% of the participants are married, 0.7% are divorced and the rest (2.6%) did not want to answer.

Respondents were asked about participation in student mobility. About 65.4% of the sample (282) have already participated in an Erasmus or other student exchange programme. Almost 40% of the students went on exchange in the academic year 2020/2021. 9.5% of students in the academic year 2019/2020, 20% in the academic year 2018/2019 and about 8% in the academic year 2017/2018.

Most students (43.6%) chose the summer semester, while 35.7% chose the winter semester. Less than 21% of the students went abroad in both semesters. The most common duration of student mobility for respondents was 5 months (35.4% of all respondents), followed by 6 months (16%), 4 months (15%) and 10 months (10%).

Figure 6 shows the monthly average net income of the sample. The majority of the sample has a relatively low average net income. A large proportion of the respondents, about 19.3% has no income.

*Figure 6: Monthly average net incomes of the respondents*



*Note: n=431*  
*Source: Own work.*

### 3.4 Results

The results of the qualitative research are presented with some comments of the mobility coordinators from the interviews, followed by the results of the quantitative research's results, the answers to the questionnaire. For each key question of the questionnaire related to the research questions, the answers are presented with detailed descriptive statistics and charts. In addition, the results of hierarchical clustering are shown.

#### 3.4.1 Mobility coordinators' views related to the research topic

When asked about the predominant motives, the interviewed Erasmus coordinator from UL told me that travelling also motivates students to participate in the Erasmus programme, but added: 'Actually, not travelling could also motivate students to join Erasmus! For example, many students do not leave their home country, and therefore increases their desire to explore what's over the border'. The coordinator at UL suggests that the opportunity to travel is a



motivator in the middle range (3 on a 5-point Likert scale) for students to participate in student mobility. According to the UL interviewee, the main motivators for participating in student mobility are: self-discovery, meeting new friends, and starting an independent life.

The interviewee from UG sees travel as a trigger to apply for Erasmus programme, as travel can stimulate interest in other cultures and motivate students to spend a longer time abroad. The interviewee from UG believes that it depends on the person how much the opportunity to travel motivates them to participate in an Erasmus or other exchange programme. Personally, however, UG coordinator rates this motivating factor higher than average. International Relations employee of UG believe that the main motivations for participating in student mobility are: expanding one's knowledge, learning or improving a language, learning about a new university system, building an international network, travelling within the host country, facing the challenge of surviving alone abroad.

When asked if travel is a motivator for participating in student mobility, the respondent from UT answered with a resounding yes. The respondent from UT would describe travel as a strong motivator, 4 on a 5-point Likert scale. The coordinator of UT mentioned the following among the main motivations for participating in student mobility: 'visiting new countries, learning another language, improving intercultural knowledge and meeting new people'. From the experience of the interviewed coordinators, travel can be seen as a motivator for students to go on mobility.

The interviewee from UL is sure that students visit other cities, regions in the country of their Erasmus programme. The interviewed person from UL stated that it sometimes happens that friends and/or relatives visit students during their mobility, but not to a great extent. The UL coordinator believes that students return to the place of the Erasmus programme after the end of the programme, and often with their partners. From the perspective of the UL coordinator interviewed, the reasons for students to return for mobility are to relive their memories and experience 'what it was like when they felt really alive'.

From the perspective of the UL coordinator interviewed, the main aspects for students to choose a particular mobility destination are the cost of living and the reputation of the country - and added: 'Some students choose a destination because it is almost completely unknown to them (such as Slovenia), which I call adventurous' -. From the experience of the UL coordinator interviewed, students usually avoid choosing nearby countries and prefer more 'exotic', distant countries such as Portugal, Finland or Turkey.

The interviewed UG mentioned course selection and accreditation, language skills, previous experience in the country (travel, visits), friends who have studied there before, reputation of the foreign university and career planning as the main aspects for choosing a specific destination for student mobility. From the perspective of the UG coordinator, it depends on the students how far they travel away from their home country: more internationally experienced students go further away, inexperienced students choose a destination closer to

home. UG respondent notices that many students prefer destinations in Scandinavia with a lot of rural area and nature. This would support the assumption that students from urban areas, such as the city of Graz, like to travel to more rural areas. However, the coordinator of UG also had the opposite experience, that students chose larger cities for a more international experience.

The interviewee from UT thinks that the main aspects for choosing a specific destination for student mobility are 'suitability of available subjects, interest in a particular foreign language'. The interviewee from UT does not believe that outgoing students generally travel very far or very close from the home country for mobility and therefore suggests a 'middle golden road' in terms of distances. The respondent from UT thinks that 'rural areas are very rarely chosen by Erasmus students'.

UG respondent thinks that students are likely to return to the place of the program after the end of the Erasmus program if they were integrated during their stay abroad. This certainly depends on the networks built during the stay abroad and the friends made locally. 'If you had a positive experience while abroad, you are more likely to return to your host country'. UG coordinator believes that it is not possible to generalize the reason why students return to the mobility destination, as these reasons depend on the student, for example, visiting friends, holidays, work. Sometimes students meet their future partner abroad and decide to return together to live in the country where they met.

The UT coordinator suspects that 'many students' return to the place of mobility after the end of the program, usually with the following motivations: 'visiting friends and going on vacation', rarely for work purposes. UT respondent added at the end that 'there is a very active Erasmus student network in Trieste that organizes excursions, visits, information sessions, etc. and allows students to integrate in the new environment'. Participation in these programs also counts towards tourism expenditure.

The interviewee from UL believes that students spend money on individual and group (organized) trips, and the cost varies greatly depending on how rich a country is. UL coordinator brought an example: 'in Norway, students do not go out for drinks, but in Turkey, they live like queens and kings and can afford expensive food and drinks.'

The UG colleague explained that travel is definitely an issue in host countries and is very often supported by the international offices in host countries that organize special trips for incoming students. The UG coordinator interviewed has no information about exchange students having visits from friends and/or relatives during their mobility, but expects this to happen.

The UG interviewed said that exchange students' expenditure on tourist products depends on the host country (and is probably also linked to the scholarship received). Financial support depends on the cost of living in the host countries. UG coordinator does not have

information about what products their students purchase abroad or how much money they spend. However, in some host countries, the stipend only covers the cost of housing.

The UT respondent believes that students visit other cities, regions in the country of their mobility, and friends or relatives visit students 'quite often' during their mobility.

The UT respondent believes that students spend approximately the following amounts on specific items during their mobility:

- Accommodation: about 150 euros for a place in a double room
- Meals: 100 Euros
- Transport: 30 euros per month
- Books: 50 euros (most of the books can be borrowed from the university libraries)
- Internet: 20 euros; Phone: 20 euros; Utilities: 30 euros.

In the last part of the interviews, all coordinators were sure that students will participate in mobilities also in times of health crises, such as COVID-19. The responding person from UL thinks that some students would participate in Erasmus or another student exchange program even in times of crisis, such as COVID-19, 'no matter what, while others would rather wait'.

UG had a lot of interest in the Erasmus+ program during the spread of COVID-19. The local coordinator suspects that 'students are ready to face the challenges associated with online classes and Coronavirus'. UG respondent thinks that students would participate in Erasmus or other student exchange programs, even in times of a crisis situation, such as COVID-19. However, the UG coordinator emphasized that one of the main problems were travel restrictions and refusal to accept students during COVID-19-times from some partner universities. The UT interviewee also thinks that students would participate in Erasmus or other student exchange programs in the future even in times of a crisis situation, such as COVID-19 virus.

The main outtakes from the interviews, which were used for further analysis, are an overview of students' main motivations for going on exchange, their travel-desire and expenditures in tourism during the mobility and their participation willingness during COVID-19 health crisis. The full transcript of the interviews conducted with the mobility coordinators can be found in Appendix 2.

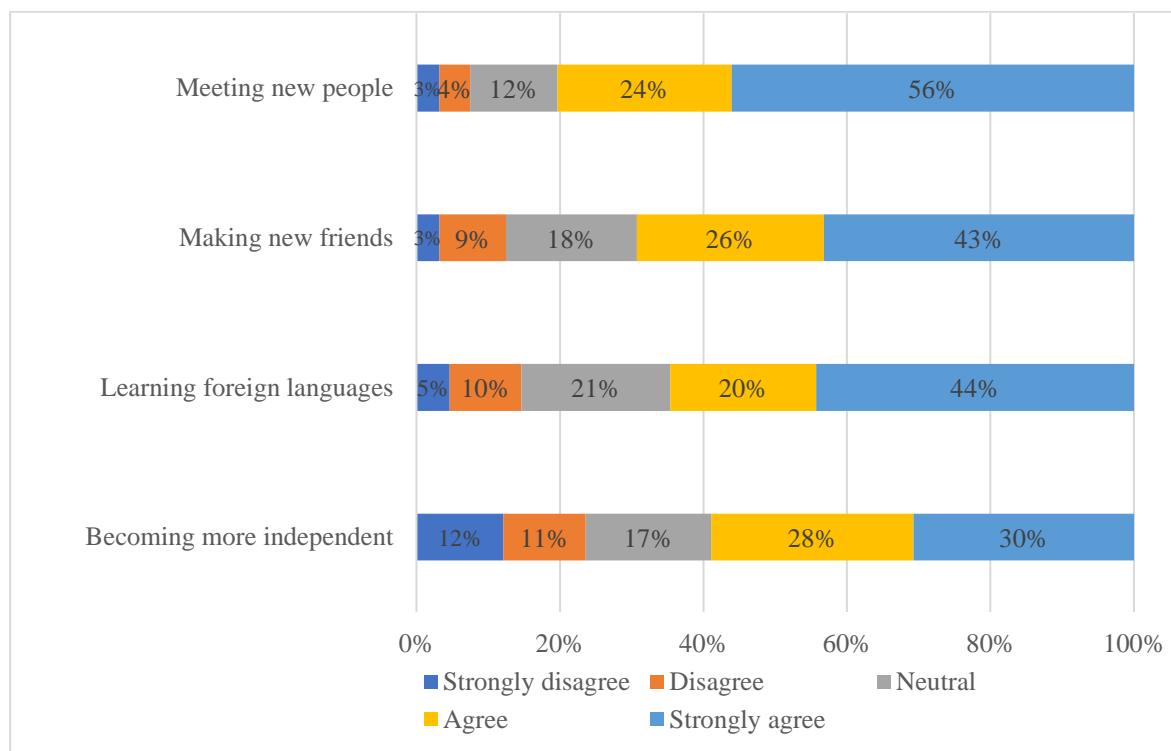
### 3.4.2 Results from the questionnaire

#### 3.4.2.1 *Motivations for participation in exchange*

The predominant and strongest motives for participating in a student exchange programme are meeting new people (for 56% of the respondents), making new friends (for 43% of the

students), and learning foreign languages (for 44% of the participants), while gaining more independence was very important for only about 30% of the sample (Figure 7).

*Figure 7: Prevailing motives for going on student mobility*



*Note: n=282*

*Source: Own work.*

At the end of the survey, more respondents mentioned their own personal benefits of student mobility and among them some students even recommend others to participate in mobility:

- *‘Erasmus was a great experience, it has taught me a lot, I would recommend it to everyone’.*
- *‘I enjoyed my Erasmus a lot, and I miss all my friends and experiences I had. Highly recommended to everyone, especially for a personal growth’.*
- *‘go alone, so you will meet new people. Therefore you can explore yourself better and see if your personality is accepted, or change it to see other affect... Erasmus gives these opportunities so pick something no one else would pick and is as far as possible away from home!’*
- *‘The ERASMUS+ Mobility was one of the best things I have experienced. It was challenging, but also very motivating and uplifting to be able to live somewhere else without initially knowing anybody, and making new friends from different cultures and backgrounds.’*

- *'I was also an ESN "buddy" for incoming students for a few years and made great, lasting friends, both by being a buddy and by going abroad myself (where I also had a 'buddy'). Student mobility programs are, in my opinion, the greatest way to foster international cooperation and understanding and to educate young people on cultural differences and prevent bias'.*
- *'In 2016 I spent three months in Sydney attending high school and living with a host family and I really enjoyed that experience because I met new people, learned new things from different cultures and improved my English; that's why I decided to study abroad with the Erasmus program now that I'm attending the 2nd year of university.'*
- *'Because of the Erasmus+ mobility I have visited places in Europe that I normally would not have visited (nor would I have even considered visiting). The places I visited during that period can be found on average within a 400km radius from my mobility destination.'*

#### 3.4.2.2 Primary reasons and prevailing factors for choosing a mobility destination

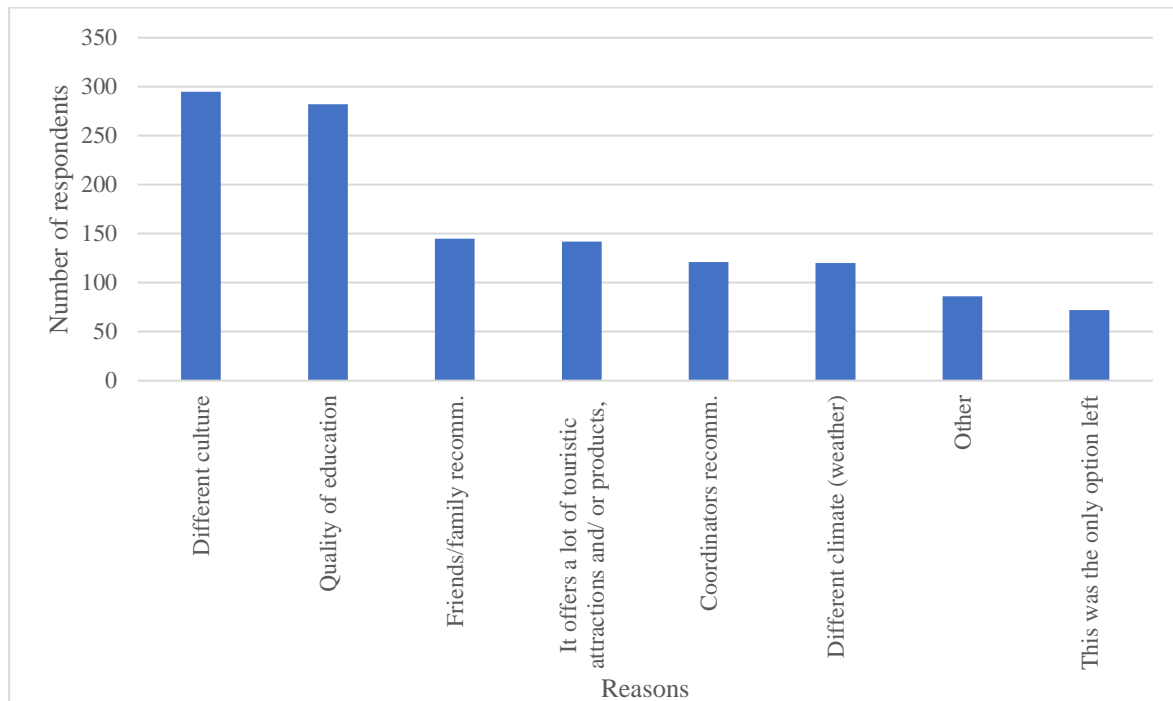
Figure 8 shows the primary reasons for choosing a mobility destination among former and current exchange students. Among the primary reasons for choosing a mobility destination, current or former mobility participants marked different culture first (295 answers), then quality of education (282), followed by recommendations from friends or family (145), tourist attractions offered (142), recommendations from coordinators (121), different climate - weather - (120), other (86), and in the last place 'only option left' (72) was marked.

On the other hand, potential future participants in student mobility ranked also different culture first (109 answers), then quality of education (103), followed by different climate (68), the tourist attractions offered (59), recommendations from friends or family (48), recommendations from coordinators (17), while 'only option left' and other reason got much lower ranks (less than 10 students chose these options) compared to their peers who participated/or are currently participating in an exchange (Figure 9).

Figure 8 and Figure 9 about the primary reasons for choosing the mobility destination (past/current participants and potential future participants) show that tourist attractions are not the most important, but they are not irrelevant either.

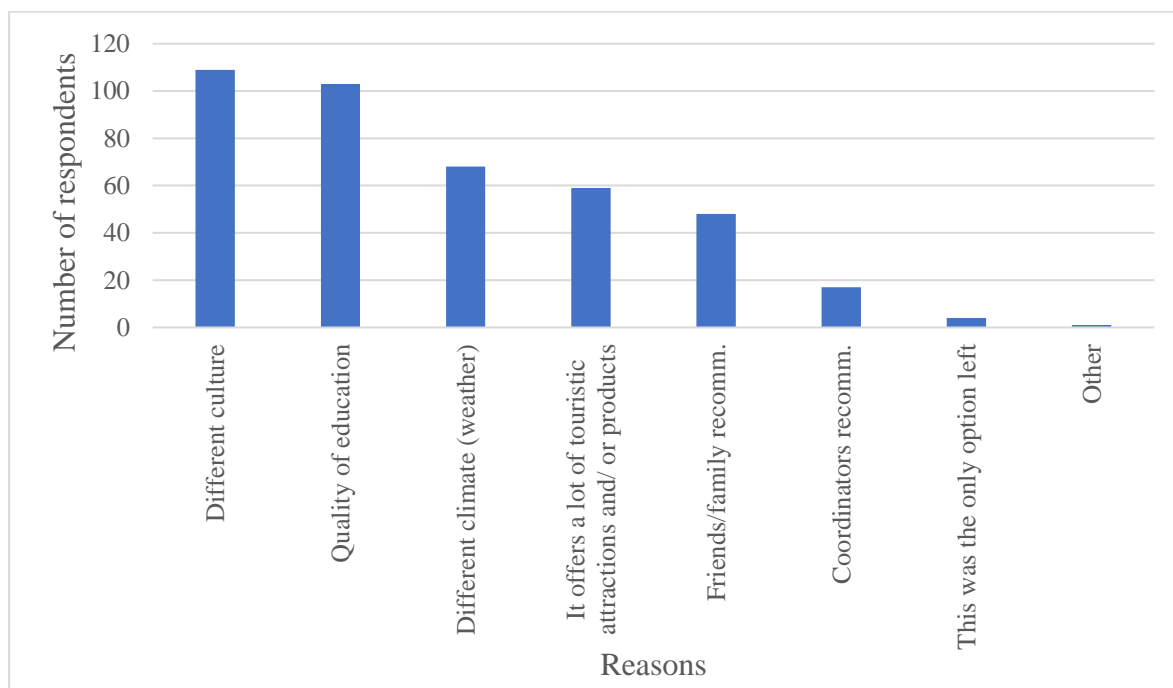
Most of the responding exchange students (78.7%) have not visited the place of mobility before their mobility. Some students have previously visited the place of their exchange with family (7.8%), friends (8.9%) or alone (7.1%). More than half of the future potential exchange students (54%) did not visit the desired mobility location before. 28% of students visited the desired location with friends. About 12% of students visited the desired mobility location with family, about 11% alone, and about 3% did not want to answer this question. Those who have visited the destination before and are now coming back might have been influenced and motivated by the (positive) experiences during the previous visits.

*Figure 8: Primary reasons for choosing the mobility destination (past/current participants)*



*Note: n=282. Source: Own work.*

*Figure 9: Primary reasons for choosing the mobility destination (potential future participants)*



*Note: n=149. Source: Own work.*

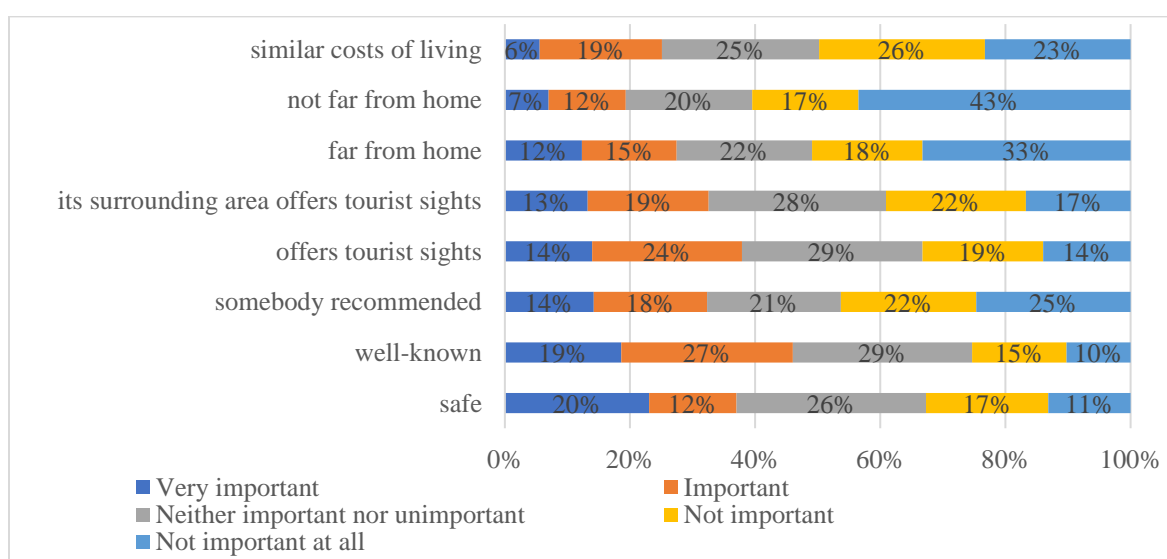
Some former exchange students tried to explain their reasons for the exchange and the choice of destination at the end of the questionnaire:

- *'I went to a remote Finnish city for exotism: landscape, real winter, snow, strange culture... so I marked "tourist" purposes... A paradise for students but small and boring for tourism.'*
- *'I just wanted to go somewhere where I've never been before and likely wouldn't visit on my own and I didn't have to pay attention to subjects, credit points or grades.'*
- *'I went to Aux because it was the place of Emile Zola and Paul Cezanne I studied French and I love Arts I still paint.'*

Figure 10 on the predominant factors for choosing a mobility destination reflects that factor for which the most students referred as being very important was safety, for which 20% of the respondents said it was very important factor. 14% of the respondents indicated that the destination offers tourist sights is very important factor and 13% of the respondents found it very important that the area surrounding the mobility destination offered tourist attractions. 19% of the students surveyed indicated that the familiarity of a mobility destination (well known) was very important for them.

As there is a high distribution of answers, averages for the variables were calculated and the, to see on average, which are the most important factors for choosing a mobility destination. The means of variables were sorted from the highest to the lowest and presented in Table 2. In general, the means are quite low for most variables. Since the variables with the first two highest means were touristic sights/ products offered in the destinations' surrounding area (3.29) and safe destination (3.25). The third variable, tourist sights offered at the destination (3.04) is also slightly above 3.

*Figure 10: Prevailing factors for choosing a mobility destination*



*Note: n=431. Source: Own work.*

I calculated one sample t-test to check, if the averages for the prevailing factors are significantly higher from 3. From Table 2 it can be seen, that only the surrounding area's tourist attractions and/ or products offered and safe destination are statistically significantly higher than 3. None other, even 'It offers a lot of touristic attractions and/ or products' or 'Well known destination' are not statistically significantly higher than 3. Standard deviations are high again suggesting that there is a high variation in the answers, which motivated me to make the cluster analysis and further analysis.

*Table 2: Means, standard deviation, t-test and significance of the prevailing factors*

| Variables (prevailing factors)  | N   | mean | sd   | t-test | sig |
|---|-----|------|------|--------|-----|
| Its surrounding area offers a lot of touristic attractions and/ or products | 429 | 3.29 | 1.22 | 4.89   | *** |
| Safe destination  | 429 | 3.25 | 1.27 | 4.10   | *** |
| It offers a lot of touristic attractions and/ or products                   | 429 | 3.04 | 1.25 | 0.74   |     |
| Well known destination  | 429 | 2.90 | 1.27 |        |     |
| Recommendation  | 429 | 2.75 | 1.37 |        |     |
| Similar costs of living   | 429 | 2.58 | 1.20 |        |     |
| Far away from home  | 429 | 2.55 | 1.40 |        |     |
| Cheaper costs of living   | 429 | 2.23 | 1.31 |        |     |
| Not far away from home  | 429 | 2.06 | 1.21 |        |     |
| *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1  |     |      |      |        |     |

*Note: n=429. Source: Own work.*

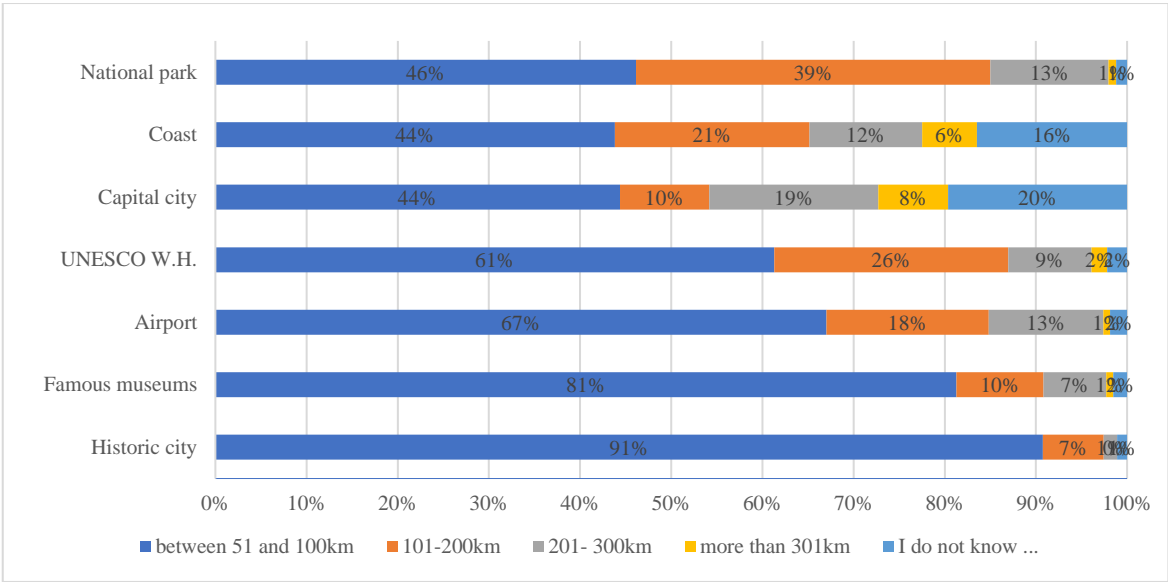
Figure 11 shows the destination attributes with the distance from the place of mobility. The destination of exchange students was relatively close (51-100 km) to historical cities (about 90% of respondents), famous museums (more than 80% of respondents) and airports (almost 70% of respondents). Capitals and coasts were also relevant as the mobility destination of more than 40% of the respondents was 51-100 km away from the mentioned attributes.

In Figure 12, under the destination attributes, the distances of the tourist locations from the desired mobility destination can be seen. For those who have not yet been mobile but plan to participate in student exchange in the future, proximity (between 51 and 100 km) to historic cities and famous museums seems to be the most important (over 60% of respondents). They agreed that proximity to an airport is also important (almost 60% of respondents), distance to a UNESCO World Heritage site is slightly less important (around 50% of respondents). Proximity to a capital city is desired by nearly 50% of students. Distance to a coast or national park was least important to participants (only about 40% of respondents). Almost 20% of the students surveyed said it was very important, and about 30% of respondents ticked it important, that the surrounding area of the mobility destination offers tourist attractions (Figure 10 above).



Descriptive statistics show that proximity to historic cities, famous museums, and airports are important to both past, current, and future exchange students, but UNESCO world heritage sights, capitals, costs, and national parks are less important to all respondents.

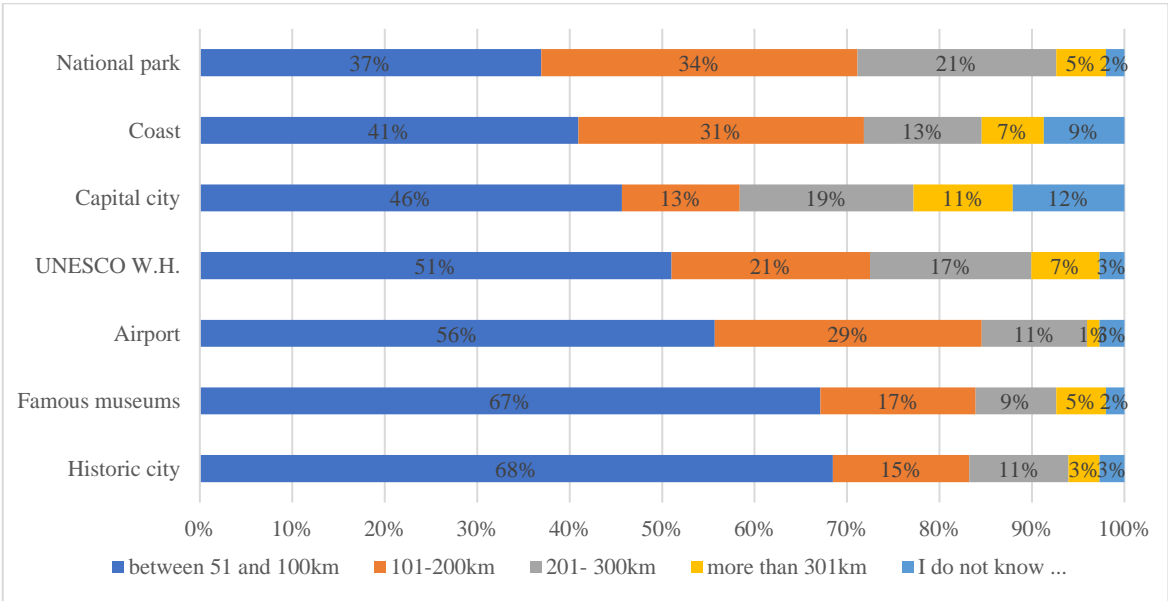
*Figure 11: Destination attributes- distance of touristic places from the chosen mobility destination*



*Note: n=282*

*Source: Own work.*

*Figure 12: Destination attributes- distance of touristic places from the desired mobility destination*

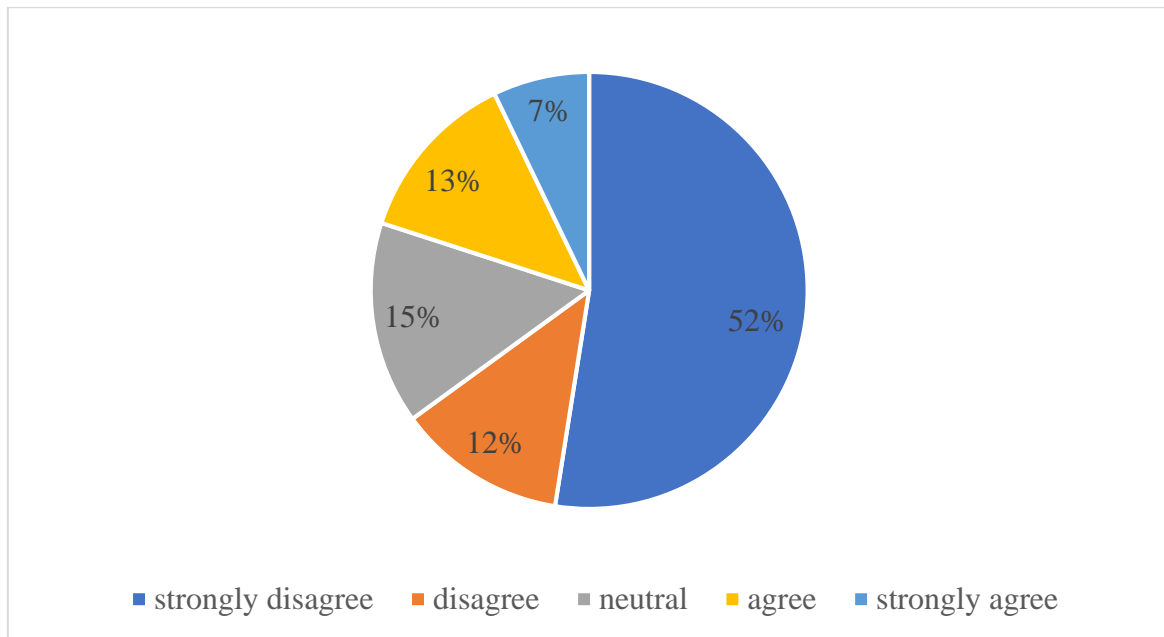


*Note: n=149*

*Source: Own work.*

On average about 10% of the responding students found cheaper living costs very important (see Figure 13) when choosing a mobility destination. For 43.3% of the respondents cheaper cost of living is not important at all. From the previous results, it can be concluded that for most participants, cheaper cost of living in the host country is not at all or less important compared to other factors.

*Figure 13: Importance of cheaper cost of living*



*Note: n=282*

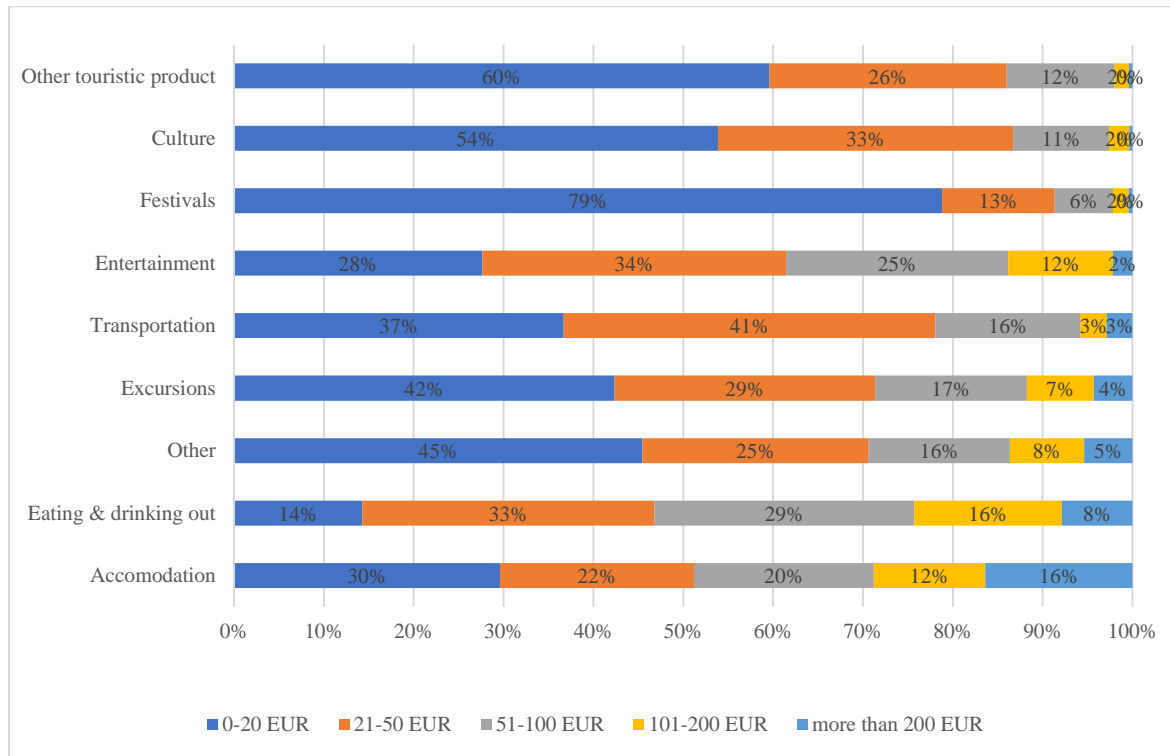
*Source: Own work.*

### *3.4.2.3 Spending during the mobility*

Figure 14 shows the expenditure of exchange students in 9 different expenditures categories during mobility. Each category is explained separately. An average students spent 64 EUR each month on accommodation. About 16% of the students spent the highest amount on accommodation (more than 200 EUR) in each month (see Figure 14). In this category the most money was spent, so accommodation can also be described as the most expensive. However, many students preferred cheaper accommodation, as about 30% of the respondents spent 0-30 EUR on accommodation.

An average students spent 56.5 EUR each month on eating and drinking out, 40 EUR each month on entertainment, 36 EUR each month on excursions, 31 EUR each month on transport, 22 EUR each month on culture, 21 EUR each month on other tourist products, 16 EUR each month on festivals and 38 EUR each month in other category. However there is high variability on the expenditure categories therefore the share of respondents that monthly spent different amounts of money on different categories presented in Figure 15.

*Figure 14: Average monthly spending by categories*



*Note: n=282*

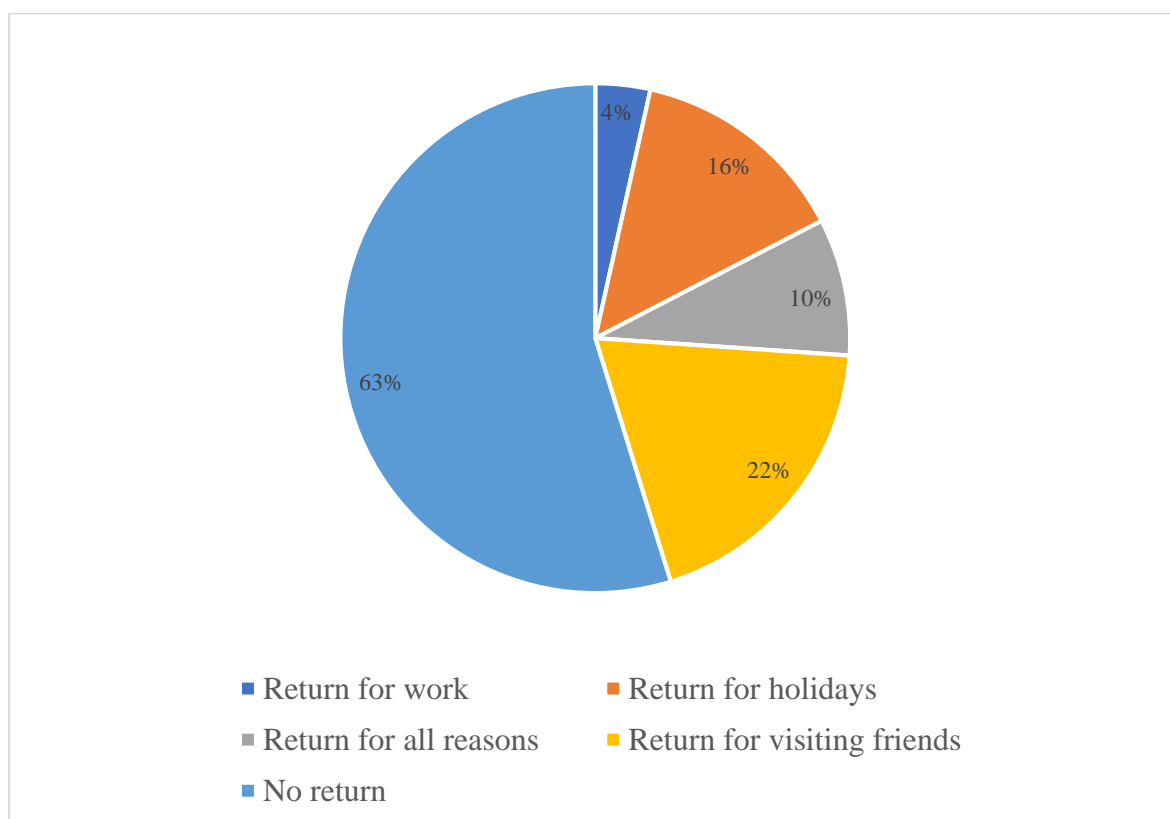
*Source: Own work.*

More than half of the students surveyed said they would spend less on average in each category in their home country. About 25% of them would spend nearly the same amount of money on mobility abroad, 18.4% would spend less money abroad than at home and about 5% were unsure or did not answer.

In addition to spending by current exchange students, additional tourism revenue is generated by returning students. More than half of the participants (63%, 169 out of 270) have not yet returned to their place of mobility. 22% of participants (58 out of 270) returned to the mobility destination to visit friends, 16% of the participants (43 out of 270) with the purpose of holiday, 4% (11 out of 270) to work and about 10% of the participants (28 out of 270) with all the previously mentioned reasons.

About half of the respondents (50.4%, 141 out of 280) would like to return in the future to their place of mobility for holidays, visiting friends and work. Especially for holidays would like to return 41% of the participants (115 out of 280), followed by visiting friends (26%, 73 out of 280) and work (8%, 22 out of 280). Only 3.6% of respondents (10 out of 280) do not want to return (Figure 15).

*Figure 15: Returning to the place of the mobility and its reasons*



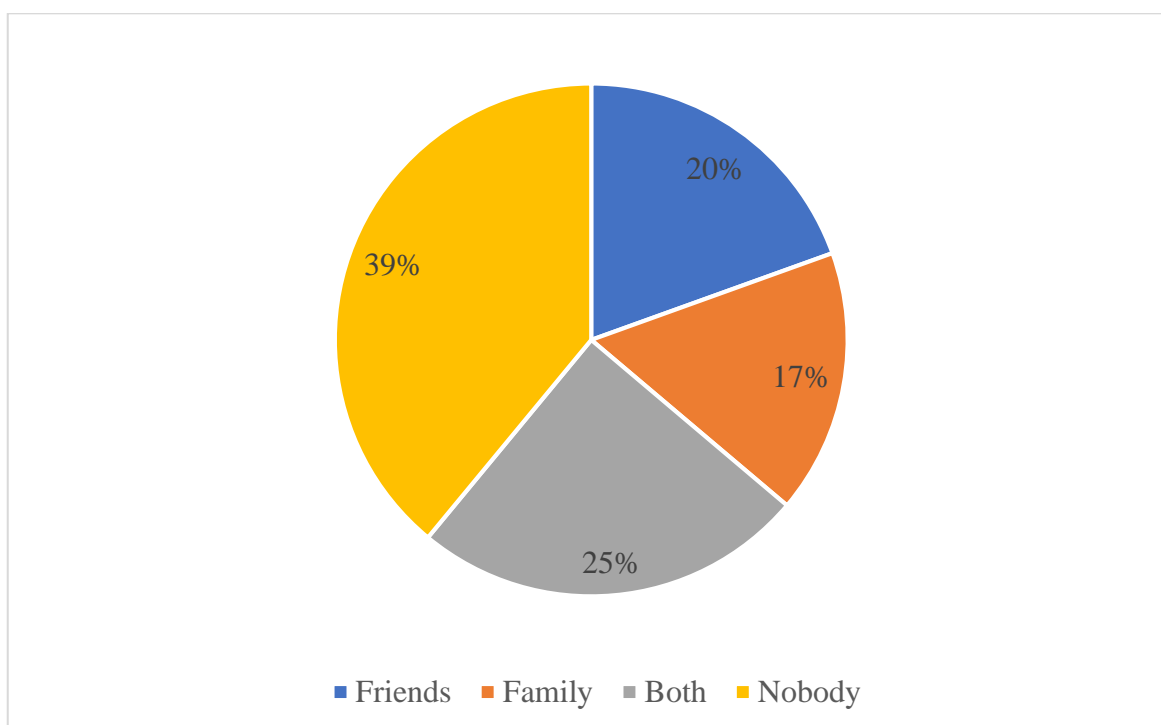
*Note: n=282*

*Source: Own work.*

Recommendations of the mobility destination may also increase tourism spending, i.e. additional revenue. In general, 95% of the participants have already recommended the chosen destination to others. About 60% of the participants recommended their mobility destination to both friends and family. About 30% of the respondents recommended only to friends, almost 5.5% recommended only to their family and only about 5% did not recommend the mobility destination to anyone.

Visitors, i.e. visiting friends and families during mobility also resulted in tourism spending. Almost 25% of the respondents were visited by both their family and friends. About 19% of the exchange students were visited by friends only. 16% of the respondents had their families as visitors during the mobility. A large proportion of responding students (39%) had no visitors during their mobility. More than half of the future potential exchange students (58%) would also have visits from friends and family. About 20% of them would probably be visited only by friends, 6% only by family and 17% by no one (Figure 16).

*Figure 16: Visitors of students during mobility*



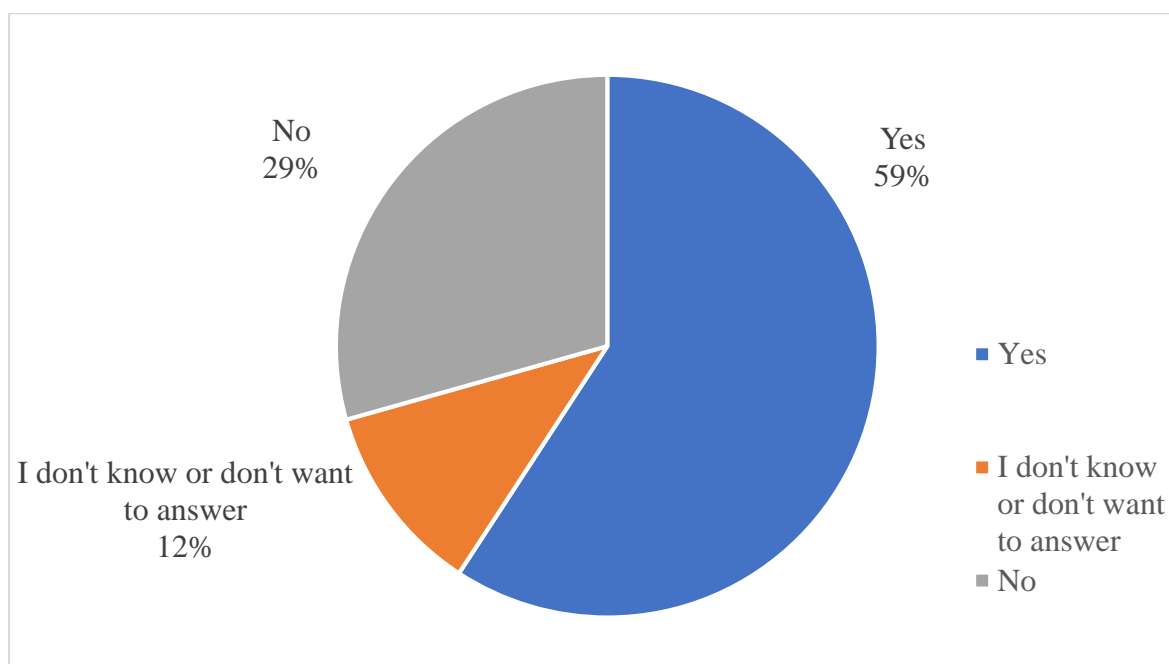
*Note: n=282. Source: Own work.*

#### *3.4.2.4 Participation in student mobility during times of a crisis*

Figure 17 shows the extent to which students are willing to participate in mobility in times of crisis. 59% of responding students would participate in Erasmus or another student exchange programme, even in times of a crisis situation, such as COVID-19. 29% of respondents would not participate in a student exchange during a crisis, while 12% were unsure whether they would participate or not respond (Figure 17). This high willingness rate demonstrates the resilience of educational tourists, i.e., exchange students. and gives an answer to the Q6 research question.

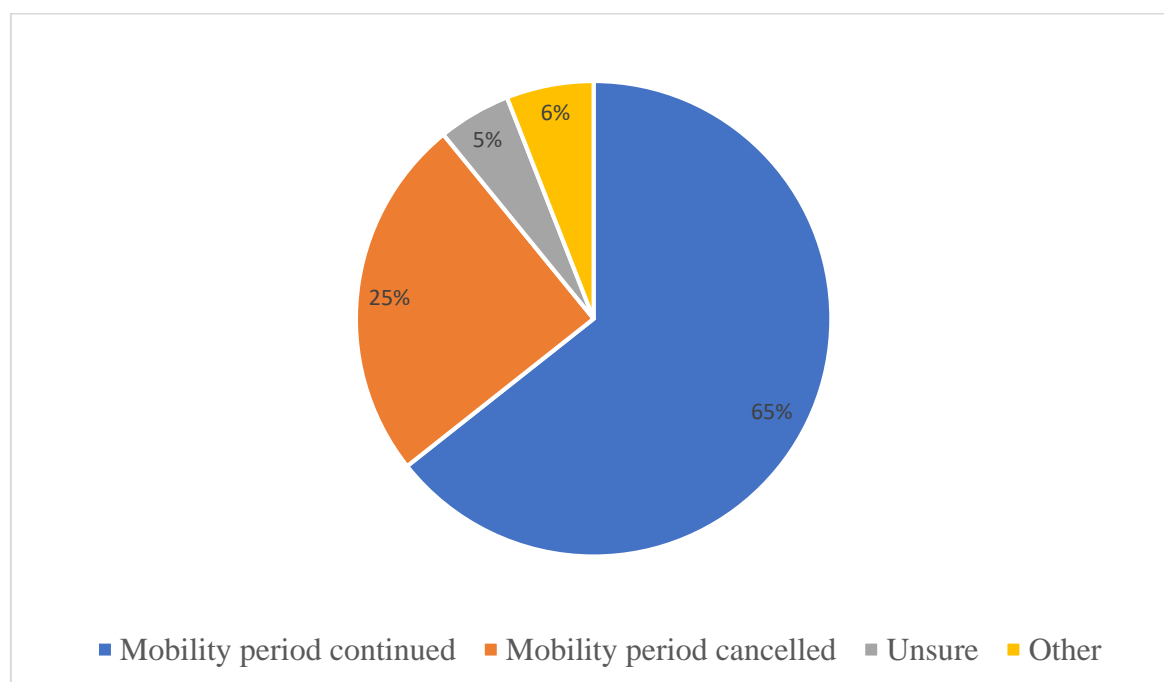
In addition to the results of my own survey, Figure 18 and Figure 19, adopted from the ESN Annual Report 2019–2020, also clearly show that most students decided to continue their mobility period (65%) and stay in the host destination (42%), even in the face of the pandemic crisis. 25% of mobility periods were cancelled, 5% of students were unsure and 5% of students ticked another option (ESN, 2020). However, 40% of exchange students returned home from the exchange location, 8% of students were unable to go on their exchange, 4% of participants were stuck or unable to return, and 5% of students were undecided. The high numbers of students who continued their mobility and stayed at their destination demonstrate the resilience of educational tourists.

*Figure 17: Willingness to participate in student mobility during times of a crisis*



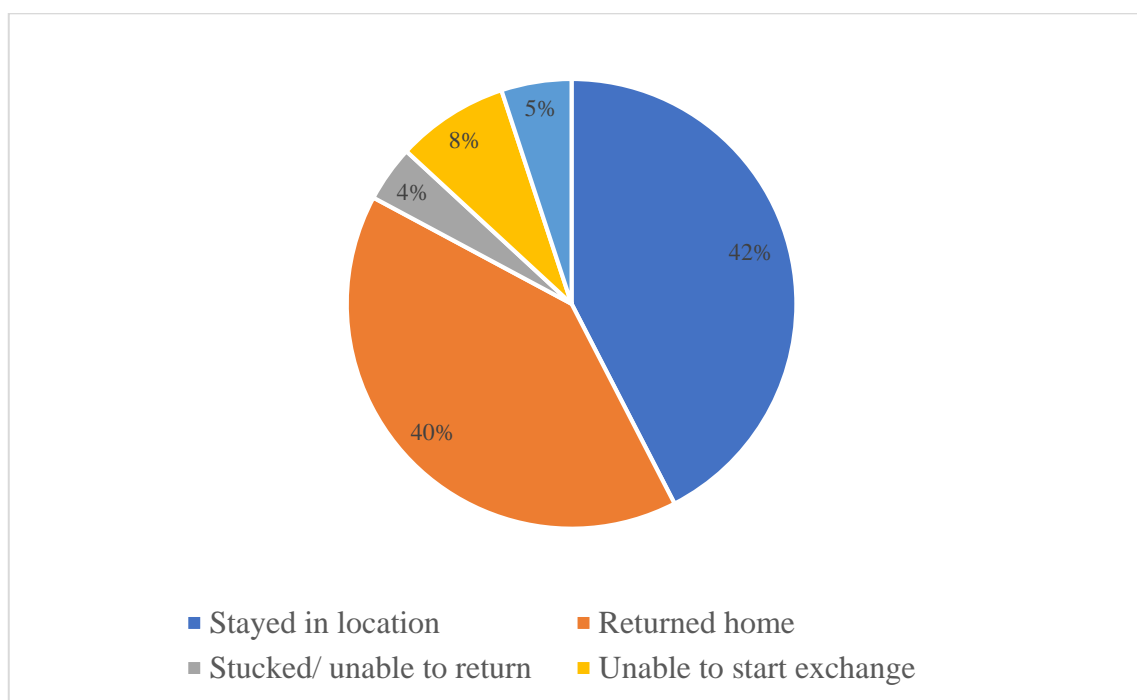
*Note: n=431. Source: Own work.*

*Figure 18: Impact of the COVID-19 virus on student mobilities in Europe.*



*Adopted from ESN research, ESN Annual report 2019-2020 (2020).*

Figure 19: Physical location of exchange students in Europe during the COVID-19 virus.



*Adopted from ESN research, ESN Annual report 2019-2020 (2020).*

Student participation in mobilities during COVID-19 Coronavirus is also evidenced by the results of the survey conducted in April 2021. Several students referred to their student mobility experiences during times of COVID-19 pandemics at the end of the questionnaire, in the free space provided:

- *'It's only one semester, but I really didn't want to miss out on this. It was easy for me to choose to go, as the country I'm in (Austria) handles the crisis a bit better than my home country (France) + I already had one Erasmus experience in the past, so I'm not disappointed to not get to enjoy the whole "social experience". Plus I work at a local radio in Graz, so it's really a different Erasmus experience, but I'm glad in chose to do it despite COVID-19!'*
- *'It is way harder to do an Erasmus in COVID times.'*
- *'Covid19 did affect my mobility experience, but I still have met a lot of new people and had a great time with them. If I could, I would do the exchange experience all over again.'*
- *'I went on exchange in Ljubljana during COVID, in September and October 2020. I went back much earlier because of extreme measures taken in the country and thus don't have a very good experience or a 'normal' one.'*
- *'I'm still on my Erasmus year and I couldn't really do much because of COVID-19'.*
- *'My Erasmus Semester ended early because of COVID-19. Otherwise it would have lasted 6 months. This is also the reason why there were no visitors and why I haven't visited the destination since my stay'.*

- *'My Erasmus+ program was during COVID-19, there would have been other behaviour/answers if there wasn't closed culture, restaurants etc.'*
- *'The amount of money spent on extra-curricular activities was severely limited by the pandemic and the lockdowns. I was not able to participate in any excursions or student activities, hence why my spending in Lisbon was reduced and turned out to be even lower than my normal spending on going out, tourism activities, etc. here in Graz'.*

### 3.4.3 Hierarchical clustering

The dendrogram in the appendices (Appendix 4) shows the different clusters based on the distances. Three main groups of students were identified using cluster analysis. Table 3 shows the absolute and relative size of the clusters, as well as the segmentation variables and the mean values of each segmentation variable for each segment. Cluster 1 comprises 16.4% of the participants (46 individuals out of 280). Cluster 2 is the largest group (with 202 respondents, 72% of the observations), and the smallest number of participants is in Cluster 3 (32 students, 11.4%).

Most individuals from Cluster 1 (97.8%) stayed at their destination during the summer season (spring semester) and their mobility lasted an average of 10.1 months. 63% of this group is female. Cluster 1 has the highest value for previous visits to the destination (28.4%) compared to the other clusters, which is located the farthest from home (2.63). They spend more than average on food (2.74), festivals (1.2), entertainment (2.3), excursions (2), and other items (1.41), but have the lowest spending on culture (1.48). Cluster 1 members accept the most visitors (1.04), and they have the highest value for the importance of language (4.13), hence I propose the nickname 'Langue learners' for them. Meeting new people is also an important motivation (4.13) for this cluster. They prefer safety (2.87) and well known destinations (2.54). Independence is also above average for 'Langue learners' (3.61).

Cluster 2 mobility lasted an average of 5 months and 60% of the participants preferred spring (summer) semester mobility. 73.8% of Cluster 2 are female. Examining the reasons for students' choice among the segmentation variables for cluster 2, proximity to tourism has the highest value (3.64), followed by safety (3.4) touristic quality (3.31), which are on average above the mean, but not so high compared to the other variables. Cluster analysis shows that in Cluster 2, the most spending is on food (2.68) and accommodation (2.46). Since proximity to tourism, touristic quality and spending on accommodation are highest in Cluster 2, I conclude that they are most tourism oriented and suggest the nickname 'Travellers' for them. More than 83% of Cluster 2 members had visitors during mobility, which multiplies tourism spending. Regarding the importance of motives for students to go on mobility, both meeting new people and learning languages have scores above 4. Thus, for Cluster 2, the strongest motives among the segmentation variables are meeting new people and learning languages. Being or becoming independent has a value of 3.76, which is above the middle (3), so it is also an important motive for students. For Cluster 2, the similarity of the cost of living with



the home country is not of great importance compared to the other factors (2.64). In the ranking of factors for cluster 2, proximity to tourist attractions (3.64) is followed by safety (3.4), touristic quality (3.31), reputation (being well known, 2.96), recommendation (2.9) and distance (2.61).

Cluster 3 members are not keen on summer, having the lowest score (46.9%) for this time of year. This group spent the least amount of time on mobility (4.53). Cluster 3 has the lowest percentage of females. Members of this cluster seem to choose nearby destinations as they have the lowest value for distance (1.94). Cluster 3 spends the most on food (2.88) and entertainment (2.25) and the least on accommodation (1.81), excursions (1.62) and festivals (0.844). From this I conclude that they prefer to try and enjoy local cuisine, go to parties and travel less, so I suggest the nickname 'Gourmands' for Cluster 3. Gourmands had the fewest visitors (0.75). Compared to the other clusters, they find independence (2.06), recommendations (2), safety (1.44) and well-known destinations (1.41) less important. Touristic attractions and touristic products offered (0.125), touristic destination (1.34) and proximity to touristic places (1.47) are least important to this group. This group is the least tourism oriented.

From the cluster analysis, it is not possible to conclude, that students choose the destination because of tourist attractions, but the results show that tourism is important for many students, especially for the 'Travellers' type (Cluster 2).

*Table 3: Segmentation Variables, Means of each segmentation variable for each segment with cluster sizes*

| Segmentation variable / Cluster         | Overall | Cluster 1<br>'Langue learners' | Cluster 2<br>'Travellers' | Cluster 3<br>'Gourmands' |
|---|---------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Size / Cluster - Number of observations | 280     | 46                             | 202                       | 32                       |
| Size / Cluster - Proportion             | 100%    | 16.4%                          | 72.1%                     | 11.4%                    |
| Summer                                  | 64.3%   | 97.8%                          | 59.4%                     | 46.9%                    |
| Length                                  | 5.73    | 10.1                           | 4.92                      | 4.53                     |
| Independent                             | 3.54    | 3.61                           | 3.76                      | 2.06                     |
| Meet new people                         | 4.26    | 4.13                           | 4.43                      | 3.34                     |
| Learn language                          | 3.9     | 4.13                           | 4.01                      | 2.84                     |
| Safe destination                        | 3.09    | 2.87                           | 3.4                       | 1.44                     |
| Well known destination                  | 2.71    | 2.54                           | 2.96                      | 1.41                     |
| Recommended destination                 | 2.7     | 2.33                           | 2.9                       | 2                        |
| Touristic                               | 2.98    | 2.65                           | 3.31                      | 1.34                     |
| Close to tourism                        | 3.31    | 3.13                           | 3.64                      | 1.47                     |

|   |       |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Far away from home  | 2.54  | 2.63  | 2.61  | 1.94  |
| Similar costs of living                                   | 2.48  | 2.35  | 2.64  | 1.66  |
| It offers a lot of touristic attractions and/ or products | 0.2   | 0.174 | 0.218 | 0.125 |
| Transportation  | 1.92  | 1.76  | 1.95  | 2.03  |
| Accommodation   | 2.36  | 2.33  | 2.46  | 1.81  |
| Food  | 2.71  | 2.74  | 2.68  | 2.88  |
| Entertainment   | 2.23  | 2.3   | 2.21  | 2.25  |
| Festivals   | 1.09  | 1.2   | 1.11  | 0.844 |
| Culture   | 1.57  | 1.48  | 1.59  | 1.59  |
| Excursions  | 1.84  | 2     | 1.84  | 1.62  |
| Other   | 1.4   | 1.41  | 1.42  | 1.25  |
| Previously  | 20.7% | 28.3% | 17.8% | 28.1% |
| Visits  | 85.7% | 100%  | 83.2% | 75%   |
| Female  | 70.7% | 63%   | 73.8% | 62.5% |
| Age   | 1.26  | 1.41  | 1.2   | 1.41  |

*Notes: coding of the variables: Summer = choosing summer semester – 1. Length = in months from 1 to 12 or other. Independent, Meet new people, Learn language, Safe destination, Well known destination, Recommended destination, Touristic destination, Close to tourism, Far away from home, Similar costs of living, Transportation, Accommodation, Food, Entertainment, Festivals, Culture, Excursions, Other = from 1 to 5. It offers a lot of touristic attractions and/ or products = yes – 1. Previously = yes or no. Visits = yes or no. Age = in classes; 1 – below 18, 2 – between 18 and 26, 3 – between 27 and 40, 4 – over 40, 5 – option do not want to response.*

*Source: Own work.*

### **3.5 Discussion and limitations**

The most popular mobility destinations in the sample, after Slovenia (14%), were Spain (8.82%), the UK (6.26%) and Italy (6.26%), which are among the top 10 countries with the highest overall scores in the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index (World Economic Forum, 2019). Spain ranks first with 5.4 points (out of 7), United Kingdom ranks 6th with 5.2 points, and Italy ranks 8th with 5.1 points, with both countries including many tourist attractions and offering various tourism services. On average, most of the exchange students who responded to the questionnaire (90%) stayed in a place relatively close (51-100 km) to historical cities, famous museums (more than 80%) and airports (almost 70%). Capital cities and coasts were also relevant, as more than 40% of respondents were 51-100 km away from

these locations as their mobility destination. Former students' mobility destinations were relatively close (51-100 km) to historical cities (about 90% of respondents), famous museums (more than 80% of respondents) and airports (almost 70% of respondents), capitals and coasts were also close (51-100 km) (more than 40% of the respondents). Furthermore, for those who have not yet been mobile but plan to participate in student exchange in the future, proximity to historic cities and famous museums seems to be the most important (over 60% of respondents). They agreed that proximity to an airport is also important (almost 60% of respondents), distance to a UNESCO World Heritage site is slightly less important (around 50% of respondents). Proximity to a capital city is desired by nearly 50% of students. Distance to a coast or national park was least important to participants (only about 40% of respondents). Almost 20% of the students surveyed said it was very important, and about 30% of respondents ticked it important, that the surrounding area of the mobility destination offers tourist attractions. However, when asking students directly about the importance of tourist attractions in choosing a destination, 37.3% of them chose the mobility destination based on the tourist attractions offered there. My empirical evidence showed that on average the surrounding area offers tourist attractions and/ or products (mean 3.25 out of 5), being a safe destination (3.25 out of 5) and the destination offers tourist attractions and/ or products (3.04 out of 5) seem to be the most important factors influencing the choice of mobility destination. However, based on t-test, I found that only the surrounding area offers tourist attractions and/ or products and being a safe destination are statistically significantly important for the choice of mobility (as mean value was statistically significant above 3). Based on that I conclude that on average not the destination itself but the surrounding area that offers tourist attractions is the most important when choosing a mobility destination, which also answers the second research question. However, I observed a high variability of responses, so I conducted an additional analysis - a cluster analysis.

Based on the cluster analysis, I identified 3 clusters or segments, where the largest segment of exchange students is Cluster 2 (with 72.1% of the respondents), named 'Travelers'. The members of Cluster 2 have the highest scores for tourism quality and proximity to tourism, but compared to the other segmentation variables (e.g. meeting new people, languages) these are not the highest. This provides the answer to Q3 research question (*Q3: Is there a group of students for which the tourist attractions (being a tourist destination) are more important than other aspects for choosing the mobility destination? If yes, what is the size of this group?*).

Only about 10% of responding students found cheaper living costs very important (see Figure 13) and about 20% of respondents found similar living costs important (see Figure 14) when choosing a mobility destination. In addition, on average for none of the three clusters is the similar cost of living to the home country (2.64) important compared to other factors. On this basis, I answer, that living costs are not influencing strongly student's destination choice to the Q4 research question (*How do living costs influence the choice of the student mobility destination?*).

Descriptive statistics show that all participants spent slightly more money on various tourism-related products than they would have at home. Exchange students, on average, spent the most money on accommodation. The results also show that exchange students spent on trips as follows: 0-20 EUR (45% of students), 21-50 EUR (28% of students), 51-100 EUR (16% of students), 101-200 EUR (7% of students) and over 201 EUR (4% of students). Furthermore, they spent on average each month on other tourism products as follows: 0-20 EUR (58%), 21-50 EUR (27%), 51-100 EUR (13%), 101-200 EUR (1.5%) and over 201 EUR (0.5%). In addition to the descriptive data, based on the cluster analysis, especially students in the largest cluster - Cluster 2 - spent on average more on tourism products and/or services during mobility, compared to Cluster 1 and 3. Therefore, the Q5 research question (*How much money do students spend on tourism-related products and/or services during their mobility?*) is answered.

To get an insight for Q6 research question (*Will students want to go on student mobility even in times of health crisis, like COVID-19?*) students were asked about their willingness to participate in times of crisis (such as COVID-19 pandemics). Since 67% of students were still willing to participate in an exchange despite a health crisis (such as COVID-19), Q6 research question is answered.

When analysing the additional comments, opinions and feedback on the survey in the last section, there were 58 short messages. From these messages it was also pointed out that student mobilities provide an opportunity to visit destinations that students have not been able to visit before. As positive feedback, more participants wrote that the survey was '*nice*', '*nicely done*', '*about the structure, it's perfect, plus not too long not too short, very concise questions, no need to think of*', '*interesting topic*'.

Some respondents indicated distances to tourist places and spending on tourist products as limitation, as they were not sure about the exact distances and the amount of spending during their mobility. Those who went more times on student mobility, marked the lack of this option as a limitation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The importance of educational tourism and student mobility from a tourism and business perspective has been highlighted in this paper, so we can conclude that it is important that all policy makers and stakeholders consider this sub-segment of educational tourism created by international exchange students when planning and developing a destination's tourism strategy and later on. Novelli et al. (2010) noted that if more policy makers and stakeholders merge educational tourism activities, this could lead to realising a step change in the strategic implementation of a curriculum that aims to enhance students' professional and practise-based learning by providing an innovative programme that enables access to resources, knowledge exchange, capacity building, cross-cultural and philanthropic collaboration, and,

as part of the university's corporate commitment to sustainability, contributing to sustainable development practises in the broader community. If the goal of the destination is to fully realise its potential, developed, more effective coordination between the tourism sector and educational institutions is necessary.

Based on the empirical research, it can be concluded that students generally do not choose their mobility destination based on the tourist attractions available there and nearby, however, the proximity of tourist locations is important to them, as are other factors, such as the quality of education. Empirical evidence showed that on average the surrounding area offers tourist attractions and/ or products (mean 3.25 out of 5) and the destination offers tourist attractions and/ or products (3.04 out of 5) are among the most important factors influencing the choice of mobility destination. Despite of this, based on t-test, I discovered that only the surrounding area offers tourist attractions and/ or products and being a safe destination are statistically significantly important for the students during their choice (as mean value was statistically significant above 3). Based on these I conclude that on average not the destination itself, but the surrounding area that offers tourist attractions is significantly important when choosing a mobility destination. However, I observed a high variability of responses, hence I conducted a cluster analysis, with which I identified 3 clusters or segments. The largest segment of exchange students is Cluster 2 (with 72.1% of the respondents), named 'Travelers'. The members of Cluster 2 have the highest scores for tourism quality and proximity to tourism, but compared to the other segmentation variables (e.g. meeting new people, languages) these are not the highest. Hence I conclude, that there a group of students, for which the tourist attractions (being a tourist destination) are more important than other aspects for choosing the mobility destination. Thus it is worth considering international exchange students when planning tourism strategy.

The new Corona virus, like many other areas of life, has hit the Erasmus programme and other types of student mobility. The harmful effects of the new coronavirus on international higher education and student mobility are already known (Xiong, 2021). It is a fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly reduced participation in international student mobility (Xiong et al., 2021). Several studies predicted a significant decline in the number of international students in popular destination countries and also a global decline in international student mobility (Goris, 2020; Martel, 2020; Durnin, 2020; Schulmann, 2020). The decline can also be observed in the most popular mobility destinations. According to Uni-assist, Germany's main credential assessment agency, the number of international applications for the 2020 winter semester has decreased by 20% compared to the previous year (Trines, 2021). In addition to the health and safety concerns of international students who changed their minds about studying abroad during the new coronavirus, the restrictive policies implemented by top study destinations mean barriers to international student mobility (Xiong et al., 2021). Some scholars are still optimistic about the power of international student mobility to maintain its popularity after the COVID-19 pandemic, as in

the situations of the 2003 SARS outbreak and the 2008 economic crisis (Mercado, 2020; Xiong et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic also restructures the importance of all factors that influence students in their decision and choice of destination to study abroad. In general, the COVID-19 virus has placed health and safety issues at the forefront of the students' decision-making process (Marginson, 2020). Since even the coronavirus crisis has failed to completely stop ongoing and new student mobilities, it has been proven that educational tourism is a very strong, significant and resilient branch of tourism that will continue to take place and grow predictably. As a result, the tourism sector and mobility destinations can benefit even more from the presence of international exchange students and their visitors, and also from their word of mouth advertisement. Tomasi et al. (2020) investigated that educational tourism, thus student mobility can also promote local development. The research of Mosler & Dag (2018) proved the 'significant impact of international educational tourism, including potential student participation in place-based activities, increased tourism business, and economic and social benefits to the host country'.

In order to make the tourist destination more popular among educational tourists, it is necessary to effectively promote student mobility among universities and have an increased awareness of how to promote a destination (Marinescu, 2017). Lesjak et al. (2020) stated that understanding travel behaviour and its key drivers improves the ability of destination marketing organisations as well as host educational institutions to personalise tourism experiences and inform approaches, thereby improving destination competitiveness so that organisations are able to increase the attractiveness of places and educational institutions. Lesjak et al. (2020) suggest that Erasmus students represent an international travel market of great interest to universities and tourism organisations as both seek to attract this particular educational market segment.

There is a need to design new and attractive products and services for exchange students, taking into account current health and safety measures and new trends. Post-pandemic management is becoming a key factor in attracting international students (Xiong et al., 2021).

Additional research is needed from different perspectives and with different methods to provide more evidence and create intervention models for more strategic and operational use of the exchange student segment of educational tourism as a means to support local and regional tourism development in light of the new and ever-changing trends.

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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1: Summary in Slovene

### Povzetek

Študij v tujini je med študenti čedalje bolj priljubljen, zlasti za krajše obdobje. (udeležba v mobilnosti). Generacija, ki se danes udeležuje študijskih izmenjav, predstavlja turiste v prihodnosti in pomembno vpliva tudi na današnji turizem, zato se v svoji magistrski nalogi posvečam pomenu izobraževalnega turizma, zlasti študentom na izmenjavi z vidika turizma. Hkrati je bil namen ugotoviti, kaj študente motivira za študijsko izmenjavo v tujini in kako izberejo določeno destinacijo, pri čemer sem zlasti želel preveriti, ali študentje v tujino potujejo tudi zaradi obiska turističnih znamenitosti in se za kraj študija torej odločajo glede na bližino turističnih znamenitosti, kot so bližina prestolnice oziroma želijo na izmenjavo v prestolnico, obala, zgodovinska mesta, znani muzeji, kraji svetovne dediščine UNESCO in narodni parki. Konkretnije, v magistrski nalogi sem si zastavil naslednja vprašanja:

*Q1: Kako pomembne so turistične znamenitosti države gostiteljice na izbiro destinacije študentske mobilnosti?*

*Q2: Kako pomembna je oddaljenost ostalih znanih turističnih znamenitosti pri izbiri destinacije študentske mobilnosti?*

*Q3: Ali obstaja skupina študentov, za katero so turistične znamenitosti (biti turistična destinacija) bolj pomembni, kot ostali vidiki, pri izbiri destinacije za izmenjavo? Če obstaja, kako velika je ta skupina?*

*Q4: Kako življenjski stroški vplivajo na izbiro destinacije študentske mobilnosti?*

Ko študentje v tujini študirajo manj kot eno leto, jih lahko opredelimo kot turiste (Huang, 2008; Eurostat, 2013). Njihova potrošnja je torej turistična potrošnja. Naslednji cilj te naloge je bil oceniti finančni prispevek mednarodne izmenjave študentov k turizmu. Dodatno predlagam naslednje vprašanje:

*Q5: Koliko študentje potrošijo za produkte in/ali storitve, povezane s turizmom, med njihovo mobilnostjo?*

Potrošnjo študentov na izmenjavi lahko dopolnjujejo tudi obiskovalci študentov (družina in prijatelji) ter tudi sami študentje se lahko po zaključku izmenjave vračajo na destinacijo. Hkrati študentje kraj, kjer so bili, pogosto priporočajo drugim in tako pritegnejo tja več obiskovalcev. Zaradi ocene obsega dodatnih prihodkov iz turizma hkrati raziskujem, kako verjetno so študentje, ki študirajo v sklopu izmenjav v tujini, sprejemali obiskovalce, se vračali na destinacijo ali jo priporočili drugim.

Dodaten namen te raziskave je bil preučiti odpornost te vrste izobraževalnega turizma na krizo (predvsem zdravstveno krizo) in s tem pokazati, da predstavljajo zelo odporen in s tem pomemben segment izobraževalnega turizma. O moči mednarodne mobilnosti študentov je optimistično pisalo več raziskovalcev (Mercado, 2020; Xiong, Mok, Ke in Cheung, 2021). Zaradi pandemije covid-19 sem zato želel preveriti, če bi se študentje tudi udeleževali študijskih izmenjav v času krize. Zato je zadnje vprašanje, ki sem si ga zastavil:

*Q6: Si študentje želijo odpraviti na študentsko mobilnost tudi v času zdravstvenih kriz, kot je pandemija covid-19?*

Opravi sem tri intervjuje in pripravil spletni vprašalnik za zbiranje primarnih podatkov. Na podlagi opisnih statističnih podatkov ugotavljam, da lahko odgovorim na vprašanja Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5 in Q6. Med analizo sem opazil, da se odgovori študentov razlikujejo glede njihovih preferenc o destinaciji in pomenu turističnih atrakcij. Da bi preveril obstoj različnih skupin študentov, sem naredil hierarhično analizo razvrščanja v skupine (angl. cluster analysis), s čimer sem ugotovil, da obstajajo vsaj tri glavne skupine : »Učenci jezika« (16,4 % študentov), »Popotniki« (72,1 %) in »Gurmani« (11,4 %). Med njimi je največja druga skupina , v katerem so t. i. »Popotniki«, ki kažejo največje zanimanje za turizem, saj so dosegali največje vrednosti naslednjih spremenljivk: bližina turističnih atrakcij in razvitost turizma v destinaciji, pri čemer pa so zapravili največ za nastanitev. Na podlagi rezultatov analize razvrščanja v skupine, ugotavljam, da lahko odgovorim na vprašanja Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5 in Q6. Spremenljivka, povezana z življenjskimi stroški, ima nižjo vrednost v vseh skupinah v primerjavi z drugimi spremenljivkami (npr. spoznavanje novih ljudi, jezika, turizem).

Moja magistrska naloga prispeva k odprti razpravi o študijskih izmenjavah kot segmentu izobraževalnega in mladinskega turizma. Želim namreč poudariti, kako pomembno je, da odločevalci in deležniki pri načrtovanju ter razvoju turističnih strategij destinacij in tudi kasneje upoštevajo ta podsegment izobraževalnega turizma, ki ga sestavljajo študentje na izmenjavah.



## **Appendix 2: Transcript of the interviews**

### **A) Interview with Borut Petrović Jesenovec from University of Ljubljana**

- *Do you think that travelling motivates students to take part in the Erasmus program?*
- *Yes. Actually not travelling could also motivate students for Erasmus! For example, many students don't leave their home country and therefore their wish to „explore what's behind the border” intensifies.*
- *What do you think, from 1 to 5 how much motivating is the possibility of traveling to students to take part in the Erasmus program in your opinion?*
- *3.*
- *What do you think, which are the main motivations for going on student mobility?*
- *Self-discovery, meeting new friends, start to live independantly.*
- *What do you think, which are the main aspects for chosing a particular student mobility destination?*
- *Number 1. = costs and the reputation of the country. Some students choose a destination because it's almost completely unknown to them (such as Slovenia). I call them adventurers.*
- *How far do the outgoing students usually travel from the home country? (1- very close , 5 - very far)*
- *4. They avoid close countries, preferring more „exotic” ones, like Portugal, Finland or Turkey.*
- *Do you think, the students residing in an urban area, are chosing also an urban area or a rural area for their exchange? Why?*
- *Not necessarily. Some want to change their living conditions completely to try „the other side”.*
- 
- *Do you think, the students residing in a rural area (little villages), are choosing an urban or a rural area for their exchange? Why?*
- *This is a problematic question for a Slovene coordinator! Amost all Slovenia is rural, we don't have cities (Ljubljana is kind of an exception but it's so small and practically semi-rural).*
- *Do you think the students visit other cities, regions in the country of their Erasmus program?*

- *I don't understand the question. You mean if they visit surrounding cities of their Erasmus destination.*
- *Yes, I mean if they visit surrounding cities of their Erasmus destination.*
- *A funny question. Yes, of course!*
- *Do you think, that friends and/ or relatives visit the students during their mobility?*
- *Sometimes. It happens, but not on a big scale.*
- *What do you think, on which touristic products do students spend money during their mobility and roughly how much, monthly? (e.g. transportation, accommodation, organized trips, packages, entertainment, festivals, eating out...)*
- *Individual and group (organised) trips. The costs vary greatly depending on how rich a country is. For example, in Norway they don't go for a drink, but in Turkey they live like queens and kings and can afford expensive foods and drinks.*
- *Do you think that the students go back to the place of the Erasmus program after the end of the program? Yes, often with their partners.*
- *Why do the students go back to the mobility destination (e.g.: visiting friends, holiday, work, etc.) ?*
- *To relive their memories, and to experience how was it when I felt really alive (smiling).*
- *Do you think that the students would participate on Erasmus or other student exchange program, EVEN in times of a crisis situation, such as Covid-19?*
- *Some would go out no matter what. Others would rather wait.*
- *Thank you for answering my questions and helping my research!*

## **B) Interview with Dr. Christian Hirt from University of Graz**

- *Do you think that travelling motivates students to take part in the Erasmus program?*
- *Yes, I consider travelling as a trigger for an Erasmus application. Travelling can raise interest in other cultures and motivate students to spend a longer time abroad.*
- *What do you think, from 1 to 5 how much motivating is the possibility of traveling to students to take part in the Erasmus program in your opinion?*
- *This depends on the person. I would probably rate this above average with 4.*
- *What do you think, which are the main motivations for going on student mobility?*

- *Expand your knowledge, learn or improve a language, get to know a new university system, build up an international network, travel within the host country, face the challenge to survive 'alone' abroad.*
- *What do you think, which are the main aspects for choosing a particular student mobility destination?*
- *Course choice and accreditation, language skills, previous experience in the country (travels, visits), friends who studied there before, reputation of the university abroad, career planning.*
- *How far do the outgoing students usually travel from the home country? (1- very close , 5 - very far)*
- *Depends on the student; more internationally experienced students go away further, inexperienced students will choose closer destination to the home country. Therefore, this question cannot be answered clearly, and I would have to opt for the average, hence 3.*
- *Do you think, the students residing in an urban area, are choosing also an urban area or a rural area for their exchange? Why?*
- *From my experience this cannot be generalized, however, I notice that many students prefer destinations in Scandinavia with a lot of rural areas and nature. This would support your assumption of students from the city of Graz like to go to more rural areas. However, I have also experienced the opposite that students have chosen bigger cities for a more international experience.*
- *Do you think, the students residing in a rural area (little villages), are choosing an urban or a rural area for their exchange? Why?*
- *I cannot answer this question because we usually do not check if students come from a small village. We just know that they are students at the University of Graz when we nominate them for an Erasmus+ scholarship.*
- *Do you think the students visit other cities, regions in the country of their Erasmus program?*
- *Yes, travelling around in the host countries is definitely a topic. Very often this is supported by the international offices in the host countries which organise special trips for incoming students.*
- *Do you think, that friends and/ or relatives visit the students during their mobility? I have no information on this, but I expect this to happen.*

- *What do you think, on which touristic products do students spend money during their mobility and roughly how much, monthly? (e.g. transportation, accommodation, organized trips, packages, entertainment, festivals, eating out...)*
- *This entirely depends on the host country and is probably also linked to the scholarship received. The financial support depends on the living costs in the host countries. I have no information on which products our students buy abroad or how much they spend. However, in some host countries the scholarship just covers the cost of accommodation.*
- *Do you think that the students go back to the place of the Erasmus program after the end of the program?*
- *Probably they do if they were integrated during their stay abroad. This surely depends on the networks established and local friends made during their stay abroad. If you have positive experiences during your stay abroad the probability of returning to the host country is higher.*
- *Why do the students go back to the mobility destination (e.g.: visiting friends, holiday, work, etc.)?*
- *Again, this answer cannot be generalized. All of the above mentioned holds true depending on the student. Sometimes students meet their future partner abroad and decide to return together to live in the host country where they have met.*
- *Do you think that the students would participate on Erasmus or other student exchange program, EVEN in times of a crisis situation, such as Covid-19?*
- *Yes, definitely. We had a huge interest in the Erasmus+ programme during Corona times. I guess that students are ready to face the challenges involved with online teaching and Corona.*
- *However, one of the major problems were travel restrictions and refusal to accept students during Corona times from some partner universities.*
- *Thank you for answering my questions and helping my research!*

### **C) Interview with Federica Gori from University of Trieste**

- *Do you think that travelling motivates students to take part in the Erasmus program?*
- *Yes, definitely*
- *What do you think, from 1 to 5 how much motivating is the possibility of traveling to students to take part in the Erasmus program in your opinion?*
- *4.*

- *What do you think, which are the main motivations for going on student mobility?*
- *Learning another language, improving intercultural knowledge, visiting new countries and getting to know new people.*
- *What do you think, which are the main aspects for choosing a particular student mobility destination?*
- *Suitability of available subjects, interest for a particular foreign language.*
- *How far do the outgoing students usually travel from the home country? (1- very close , 5 - very far)*
- *3.*
- *Do you think, the students residing in an urban area, are choosing also an urban area or a rural area for their exchange?*
- *Rural areas are chosen very seldom by Erasmus students*
- *Do you think, the students residing in a rural area (little villages), are choosing an urban or a rural area for their exchange?*
- *Rural areas are chosen very seldom by Erasmus students*
- *Do you think the students visit other cities, regions in the country of their Erasmus program?*
- *Yes!*
- *Do you think, that friends and/ or relatives visit the students during their mobility?*
- *Yes, quite often!*
- *What do you think, on which touristic products do students spend money during their mobility and roughly how much, monthly? (e.g. transportation, accommodation, organized trips, packages, entertainment, festivals, eating out...)*
- *Roughly it could be as follows:*
- *Accommodation: about 150 Euros for a place in a double room*
- *Food: 100 Euros*
- *Transportation: 30 Euros per month*
- *Books: 50 Euros (most of the books can be borrowed at the university libraries)*
- *Internet: 20 Euros; Phone: 20 Euros; Utilities: 30 Euros*
- *Do you think that the students go back to the place of the Erasmus program after the end of the program?*
- *A lot of them do so.*
- *Why do the students go back to the mobility destination (e.g.: visiting friends, holiday, work, etc.)?*

- *Visiting friends, holiday. Seldom for work purposes.*
- *Do you think that the students would participate on Erasmus or other student exchange program, EVEN in times of a crisis situation, such as Covid-19?*
- *Yes.*
- *Would you like to add any comments to the discussed questions, topics?*
- *In Trieste we have a very active Erasmus student network that organize trips, visits, informative sessions etc. and enable the students to integrate in the new environment.*
- *Thank you for answering my questions and helping my research!*

**Appendix 3: Survey (PDF version, starts on the next page)**

# Student mobility and tourism

Dear Participant!

Thank you for opening my survey!

I am Márk Répászky, a final year Master's student at the University of Ljubljana. I am conducting a research on student mobility, Erasmus program and travel. I would like to invite you to take a few minutes and fill in my survey to support my research. The survey is anonymous.

Thank you very much!

Márk Répászky

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\* Required

1. Have you ever participated in an Erasmus or other student exchange programme?

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Yes      *Skip to question 2*

☐ No      *Skip to question 23*

2. In which academic year did you go on student exchange?

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ 2020/2021

☐ 2019/2020

☐ 2018/2019

☐ 2017/2018

☐ 2016/2017

☐ 2015/2016

☐ 2014/2015

☐ 2013/2014

☐ 2012/2013

☐ 2011/2012

☐ 2010/2011

☐ 2009/2010

☐ 2008/2009

☐ earlier

3. In which semester did you go on your mobility?

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Winter semester

☐ Summer semester

☐ Both semesters



4. How long did you stay abroad on student mobility? (number of months)

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10
- ☐ 11
- ☐ 12
- ☐ other

5. Where did you go on mobility? (Name your host city/village and country.)

---

6. What is the type of your mobility destination? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Rural area
- ☐ Urban area

7. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? I went on student mobility because... (1- not at all, 5- totally agree) \*

Mark only one oval per row.

|                                      | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I wanted to become more independent. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I wanted to meet new people.         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I wanted to make new friends.        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I wanted to learn foreign languages. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? I chose my mobility destination because... (1- not at all, 5- agree completely) \*

Mark only one oval per row.

|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| it is safe.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| it is well-known.                                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| someone recommended it to me.                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| it offers tourist sights                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| its surrounding area offers tourist sights             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| it is far from my home country.                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| it is NOT far from my home country.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| its cost of living is similar to my home country.      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| its cost of living is cheaper than in my home country. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

9. Why did you chose the above mentioned destination for your mobility? (Mark the primary reason-s.)

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Quality of education
- ☐ It offers a lot of touristic attractions and/ or products
- ☐ Recommendations from friends/ family
- ☐ Recommendations from coordinators
- ☐ Different climate (weather)
- ☐ Different culture
- ☐ This was the only option left
- ☐ Other

10. Mark on the scale, how close were the following places from your mobility destination. \*

*Mark only one oval per row.*

|                                 | 0-50<br>km            | 51-100<br>km          | 101-<br>200 km        | 201-<br>300 km        | more than<br>301 km   | I do not<br>know.     |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Capital city                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Coast                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Historic city                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Famous museums                  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| UNESCO World<br>Herritage sites | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| National park                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Airport                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

11. How much did you spend monthly on the following items during your semester(s) abroad on average? \*

Mark only one oval per row.

|  | 0-20<br>EUR           | 21-50<br>EUR          | 51-100<br>EUR         | 101-<br>200<br>EUR    | more<br>than<br>200<br>EUR | I did not<br>spend any<br>money on<br>this item. |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Transportation (by bus, train, plane, own or rented car, carpooling like blablacar)                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Accommodation for a few nights (e.g. hostel, hotel, apartment, not with contract for mobility reasons) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Eating out, in restaurants, bars, cafés (food & drink)   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Entertainment, going out   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Festivals  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Culture (museum, visitor centre, theatre, concert)   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Excursions organised by the university, ESN, travel agency or self-organised excursions                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Other tourist products (guided tours, national parks, zoo)   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>                            |
| Other  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/>                            |

12. Nearly how much would you spend monthly on the before mentioned items in your home country?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Roughly the same amount as abroad
- ☐ Less
- ☐ More
- ☐ I do not know or do not want to answer

13. Did you know that you can get discounts at several places with your student ID (European Youth Card) abroad (Europe)?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. How often did you use your student ID for discounts during your mobility?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Once in the whole period
- ☐ Once monthly
- ☐ More times in a month
- ☐ Not at all.
- ☐ Other

15. In your opinion, would you be able to visit your mobility destination without taking part in a student mobility / Erasmus+ program?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

16. Did you return to the site of your mobility after your exchange?

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Yes, for visiting friends
- ☐ Yes, for holidays
- ☐ Yes, to work
- ☐ Yes, for all reasons
- ☐ No

17. Would you return to the site of your mobility in the future?

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Yes, for visiting friends
- ☐ Yes, for holidays
- ☐ Yes, to work
- ☐ Yes, for all reasons
- ☐ No

18. Did you recommend the site of your mobility to somebody?

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Yes, to my friends
- ☐ Yes, to my family
- ☐ Yes, to both
- ☐ No

19. Would you recommend the site of your mobility to somebody?

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Yes, to my friends
- ☐ Yes, to my family
- ☐ Yes, to both
- ☐ No

20. Have you visited the mobility destination previously, before your mobility? \*

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Yes, with friends.
- ☐ Yes, with family.
- ☐ Yes, alone.
- ☐ No.
- ☐ I do not want to answer.

21. Who have visited you during the program?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ My friends
- ☐ My family
- ☐ My friends and family as well
- ☐ Nobody

22. Would you participate on Erasmus or other student exchange program, EVEN in times of a crisis situation, such as Covid-19?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes      *Skip to question 39*
- ☐ No      *Skip to question 39*
- ☐ I do not know or I do not want to answer.      *Skip to question 39*

23. Would you participate in an Erasmus or other student exchange programme?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No      *Skip to question 39*
- ☐ Maybe

24. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? I would go on student mobility because... (1- not at all, 5- totally agree) \*

*Mark only one oval per row.*

|                                    | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| I want to become more independent. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I want to meet new people.         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I want to make new friends.        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| I want to learn foreign languages. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

25. Where would you go on mobility? (Name your host city/village and country.)

\_\_\_\_\_

26. What is the type of your desired mobility destination? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Rural area  
☐ Urban area



27. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? I am going to choose my mobility destination because... (1- not at all, 5- agree completely) \*

*Mark only one oval per row.*

|  | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| it is safe.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| it is well-known.                                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| someone recommended it to me.                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| it offers tourist sights                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| its surrounding area offers tourist sights             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| it is far from my home country.                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| it is NOT far from my home country.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| its cost of living is similar to my home country.      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| its cost of living is cheaper than in my home country. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

28. Why would you chose the earlier mentioned destination for your mobility?  
(Mark the primary reason-s.)

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Quality of education
- ☐ It offers a lot of touristic attractions and/ or products
- ☐ Recommendations from friends/ family
- ☐ Recommendations from coordinators
- ☐ Different climate (weather)
- ☐ Different culture
- ☐ No other option

29. Mark on the scale, how close are the following places from your desired mobility destination. \*

*Mark only one oval per row.*

|                              | 0-50<br>km            | 51-100<br>km          | 101-200<br>km         | 201-300<br>km         | more than 301<br>km   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Capital city                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Coast                        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Historic city                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Famous museums               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| UNESCO World Herritage sites | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| National park                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Airport                      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

30. How long would you stay abroad on student mobility? (number of months)

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ 1  
☐ 2  
☐ 3  
☐ 4  
☐ 5  
☐ 6  
☐ 7  
☐ 8  
☐ 9  
☐ 10  
☐ 11  
☐ 12  
☐ other

31. Which semester would you choose for your mobility?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Winter semester
- ☐ Summer semester
- ☐ Both semesters

32. How much would you spend monthly on the following items during your semester(s) abroad? \*

*Mark only one oval per row.*

|  | 0-20<br>EUR           | 21-50<br>EUR          | 51-100<br>EUR         | 101-<br>200<br>EUR    | more than<br>200 EUR  |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Transportation (by bus, train, plane, own or rented car, carpooling like blablacar)                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Accommodation for a few nights (e.g. hostel, hotel, apartment, not with contract for mobility reasons) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Eating out, in restaurants, bars, cafés (food & drink)   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Entertainment, going out   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Festivals  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Culture (museum, visitor centre, theatre, concert)   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Excursions organised by the university, ESN, travel agency or self-organised excursions                | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other tourist products (guided tours, national parks, zoo)   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Other  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

33. Nearly how much do you spend monthly on the before mentioned items in your home country?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Roughly the same amount as abroad
- ☐ Less
- ☐ More
- ☐ I do not know or do not want to answer

34. Did you know that you can get discounts at several places with your student ID (European Youth Card) abroad (Europe)?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

35. Would you use abroad your student ID for discounts?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

36. Who would visit you during the program?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ My friends
- ☐ My family
- ☐ My friends and family as well
- ☐ Nobody

37. Have you visited the desired mobility destination before? \*

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Yes, with friends.
- ☐ Yes, with family.
- ☐ Yes, alone.
- ☐ No.
- ☐ I do not want to answer.

38. Would you participate on Erasmus or other student exchange program, EVEN in times of a crisis situation, such as Covid-19?

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Yes      *Skip to question 39*
- ☐ No      *Skip to question 39*
- ☐ I do not know or I do not want to answer.      *Skip to question 39*

## Demography

39. What is your gender? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ I do not want to answer.

40. What is your age? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Below 18
- ☐ 18-26
- ☐ 27-40
- ☐ 40+
- ☐ I do not want to answer.

41. What is the level of your education? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ At the moment I study in secondary school.
- ☐ I have graduated from secondary school.
- ☐ At the moment I study at the university or college.
- ☐ I have graduated from the university or college.
- ☐ I do not want to answer.

42. What is your marital status? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ In partnership
- ☐ I do not want to answer.

43. What is your place of residence? (Where do you live? Name your home city/village.)

---

44. What is the type of your residence? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ Rural area

☐ Urban area

45. What is your average net income? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

☐ I do not have any income

☐ 0-200 € / month

☐ 201-500 € / month

☐ 501-800 € / month

☐ 801-1000 € / month

☐ 1001-1200 € / month

☐ 1201- 1400 € / month

☐ 1401 € / month or more

☐ Other

☐ I do not want to answer

46. If you would like, you can share here any other mobility related experience, opinion, comment or send a feedback regarding the survey.

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Thank you very much for your participation! Have a nice day!

## Appendix 4: Dendrogram of the clusters

